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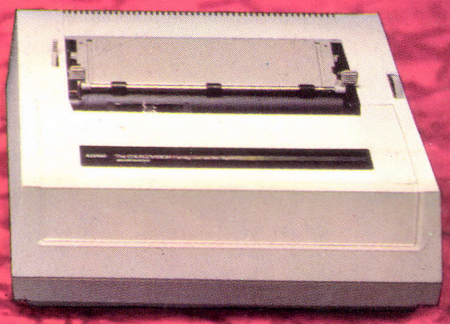
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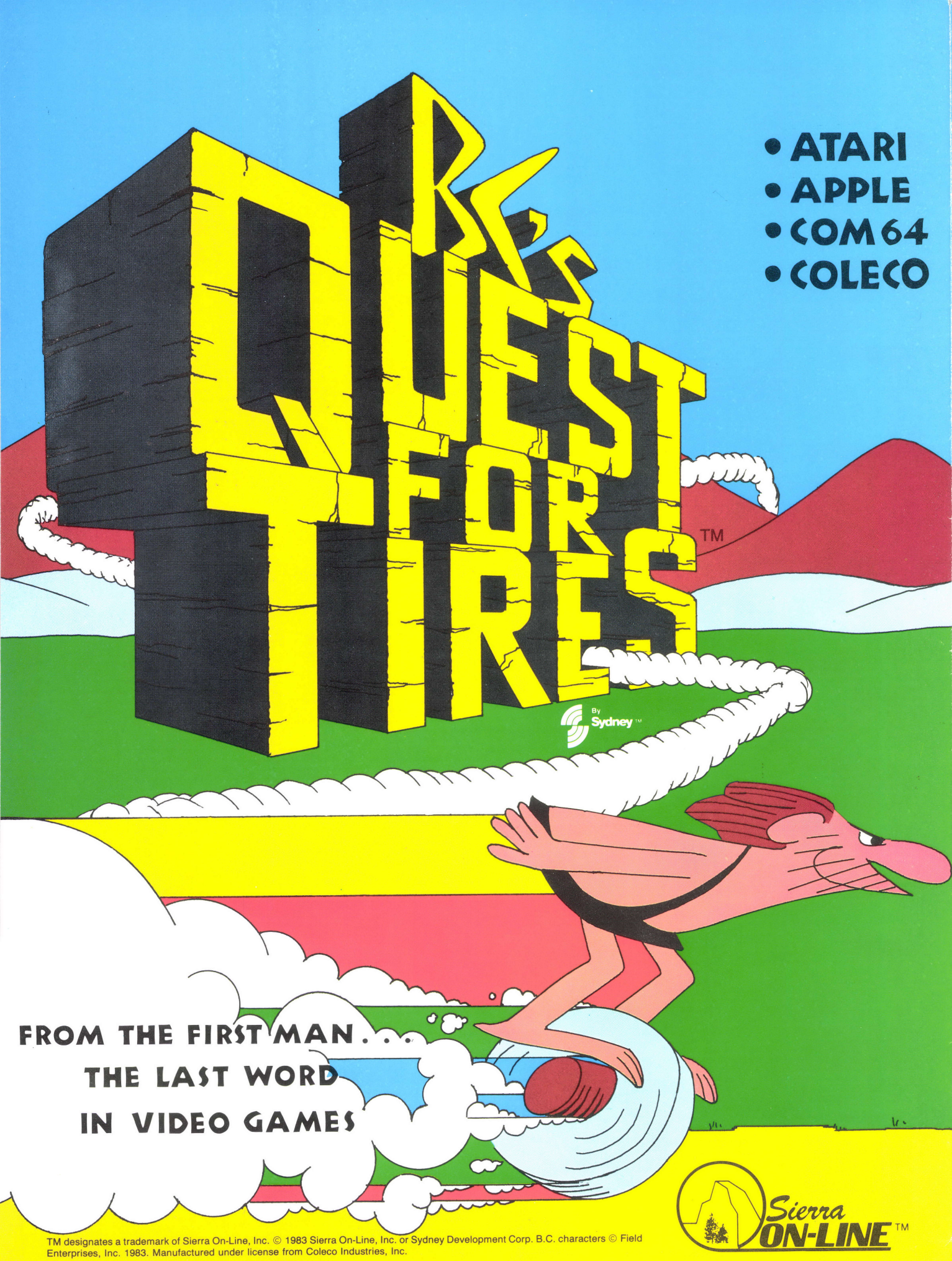






400,000 PERISH!

ALSO, THE FALL OF IMAGIC



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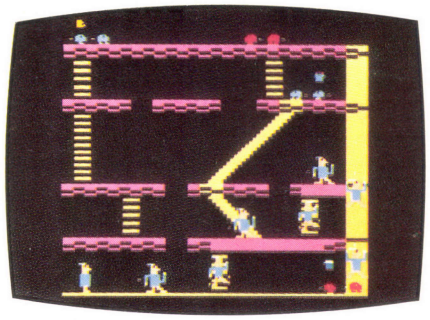
Games for the Atari computers are reviewed by Lenny Nelson.

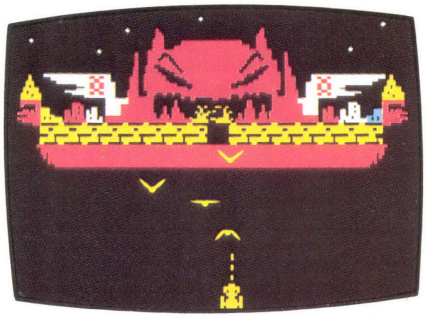
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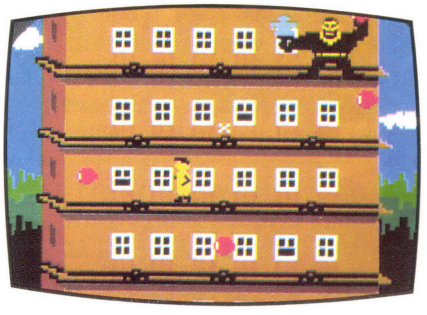
Our editors voice their opinions on the very best that the field has to offer.

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You Read it Here First 82









COVER PHOTO: ROSS M. HOROWITZ

nybbles

Industry Whispers and Meditations by Profundo

Yes, Virginia, modems that will not require telephones are on the horizon. Several companies are developing modems that will accept information from the airwaves and pass the information along to a home computer, via a radio receiver and special interfaces. You can start looking for a shakeout in the telecommunications industry, as companies that have not as yet come into the public eye fold their tents. The technology is becoming outdated before a product can be shipped. The field of modems, data base systems and phone-transmitted games has already become cutthroat, as every entrepreneur in America jumps on the bandwagon. AT&T's announced deal with Coleco for a game-transmission service may scare some people away...and then never materialize.

All of the companies developing interactive laserdisc games for home and arcade are maintaining a level of secrecy that George Lucas might envy. The secrecy mainly surrounds storylines and the visual techniques with which to tell those stories.

One secret that they are all keeping from each other is that most of next year's crop of games will contain computer animation, either totally or in coordination with live action. One company (no names, please, jobs are on the line) is doing a *Raiders of the Lost Ark* type adventure with computer animation and live action.

And we have learned that Bally/Midway has contacted Triple-I, who realized some of *Tron's* effective effects, to create twenty-two minutes of animation for a game in development there.

What would we rumor-mongers do without Atari? Rumors are running the gamut from: Warners is going to cancel Atari's computer hardware division; to: Warners is going to cancel Atari, the whole shooting match. I choose not to believe those rumors. Sure, Atari is losing a bundle for the parent company, executives are being ushered in and out like lambs to the slaughter or shear, 250 white collar jobs were cut in New York alone (who'd'a'thunk that they had so many executives so far from the SilValley?), they were forced to destroy thousands of cartridges, they are being hit by lawsuits and labor actions, and their computers are late to the Christmas market. But we all have problems. Naw, Atari will survive. What would us rumor-mongers do without them?

A group of the most prominent computer scientists in the world recently collaborated in order to create the most powerful computer mankind has ever known. The size of a 7-11, boasting 250,000K of memory, six thousand-bit macroprocessors, the computer known as Colossus chugged to magnificent life. Immediately the scientists programmed Colossus to answer this question: "Is there a God?" The computer—lights flashing, disks whirring—processed the question for brief minutes and at last delivered its reply:

"There is now."

That's no rumor, that's a joke, son.

Whatever happened to Atari's Cosmos series . . . the long-ago announced line of 3D holographic hand held games? For that matter, whatever happened to Milton Bradley's boardgame/computergames? And while we're asking questions to which there are no, or pro-forma, replies: did Mike Katz leave Coleco early this year because he saw disaster in the making?

VCS Picks of the Month: *Moon Patrol* (I don't care what anyone says, I have a good old time toodlin' and shootin') and *Krull,* both games from Atari.

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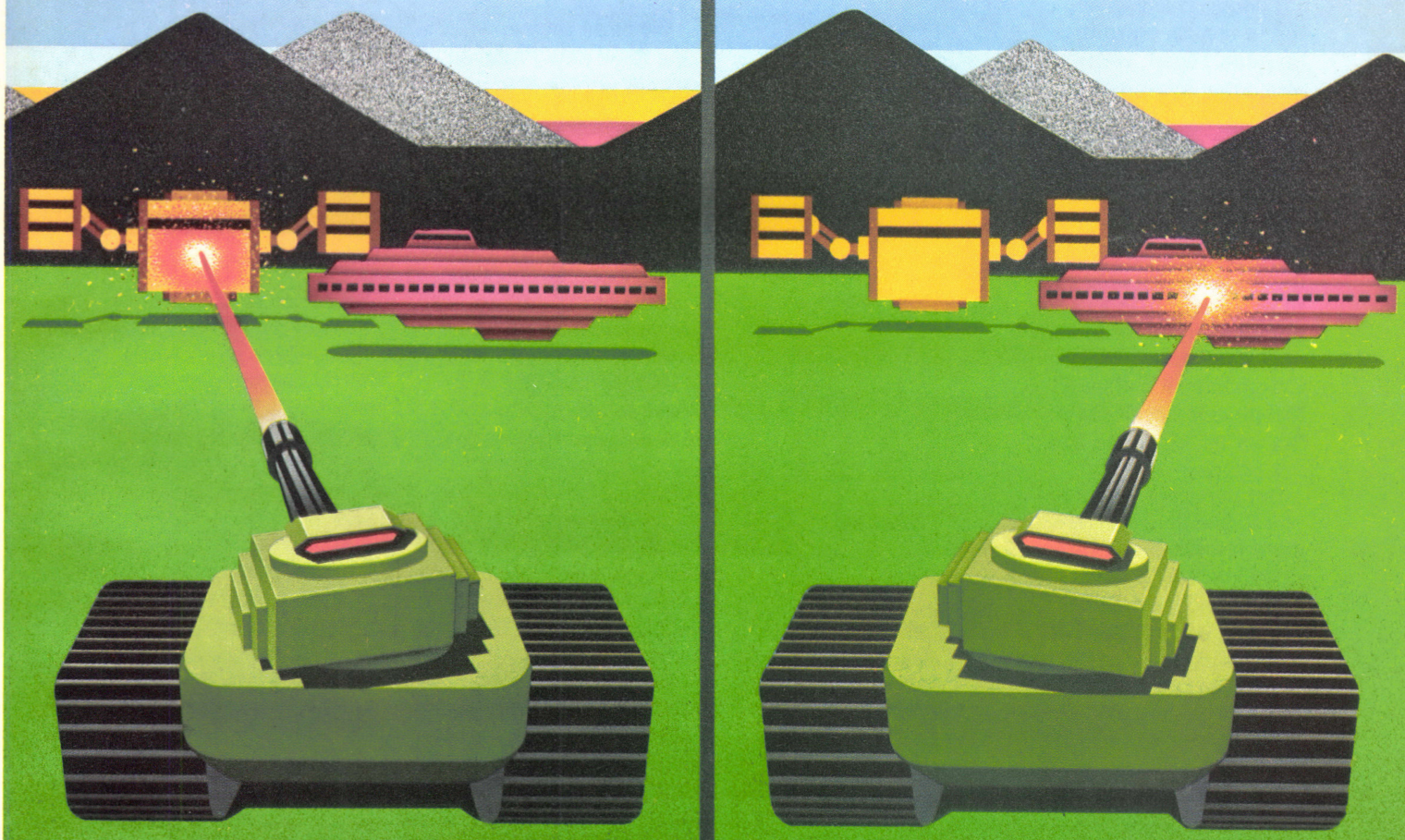
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Which player is making a tactical error?

You've fought BATTLEZONE™ tanks, flying saucers and fighters in the arcade. Now it's time to protect the home front. Because Atari's BATTLEZONE is now prepared to wage war right in your own living room.

The player on the right will most likely fail in his mission. He should've hit the fighter first. Even though it is worth 3,000 points less than the flying saucer, it is far more dangerous. It can destroy. The saucer can't.

There's another way you can rack up extra points, and you don't even have to fire a shot. By moving your tank to one side, you can often lure one enemy into another's line of fire.

Surviving BATTLEZONE is no easy mission. If you're up for it, climb into your troop transport and make tracks to the nearest store that stocks Atari games.

Only Atari makes BATTLEZONE for the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems, and a version exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.



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eye on

POULTRY OFFERINGS

Though Thanksgiving is the time to sit down to a bountiful repast, we're afraid that this month's selection of new home videogames doesn't cut it. The major Christmas releases are announced, and as good as down the chimney. And, let's face it—at least until home consoles are able to incorporate laserdisc technology and other innovations like Entertainment Software's RIP process (see below), the action is going to be at the arcades.

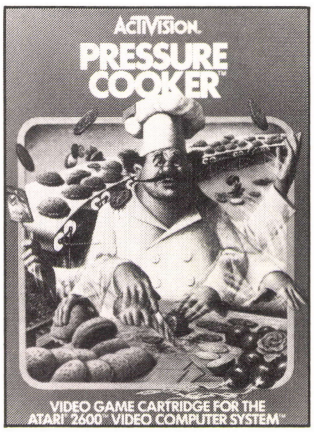
But we're not sending you to bed hungry. Here are a few news morsels to carry you over till next month (and maybe till January, and the flood of releases expected at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas).

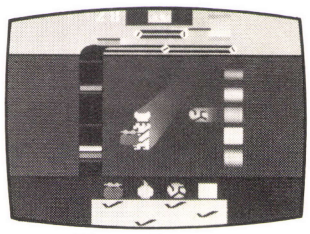
We hope you don't get stuck with a turkey.

Pressure Cooker, to jump on a built-in segue, is Activision's entry in the growing line of conveyor belt games. Short Order Sam must watch the electronic order board and assemble burgers with different combinations of lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, and onions. After finishing a burger, he carries it to the wrapping room, located on a separate screen.

Sam loses points for each mistake he makes—and, Activision assures us, he will make plenty as the game progresses and the orders mount up. 'He gets pasted by tomatoes and goes head-to-head with lettuce. Onions roll. Cheese whizzes." We hope he doesn't burn his buns.

The game was designed by Gary Kitchen for the





Your Serve.

Atari 2600.

To continue in a culinary vein Activision has souped up the 2600 million-sellers *River Raid* and *Kaboom!* for the **Atari 5200.**

Says James Levy of Activision: "The enhanced graphics and play of these popular Activision hits and the arcadelike game features of the 5200 will heighten the action for sophisticated game players." Both cartridges should be out in time for Christmas.

Coleco and MGM have signed a deal granting Coleco worldwide rights to the manufacture, promotion, and distribution of games based on the *War Games* motion picture. First up will be a **ColecoVision** cartridge, due before the end of 1983. The game contains multiple screens simulating those of the government computer featured in the film. It is the player's job, as it was the job of the young computer genius in the film, to ward off impending nuclear war.

To finish on a downbeat: the three new Probe 2000 games displayed in this month's Chip Ahoy section have (we've just discovered) been cancelled. That means *Power Lords, Lord of the Dungeon,* and *Pursuit of the Pink Panther. War Room,* announced along with the others, will see release. That one seemed to us the least promising of the lot, but we'll have to assume that NAP knows what they're doing.

SLICE OF LIFE

In these days of bombastic advertising claims (see our subscription ad this issue), it's refreshing to find a product that lives up to its name. ShowBiz Pizza Place Inc. will shortly make its 150-plus fast food/entertainment outlets (see mention in this month's Chuck E. Cheese feature) do exactly that. Not content with singing animals and dancing puppets, ShowBiz has finalized a deal to produce and screen movies in its restaurants, beginning by the end of this year in Dallas and Springfield, Missouri.

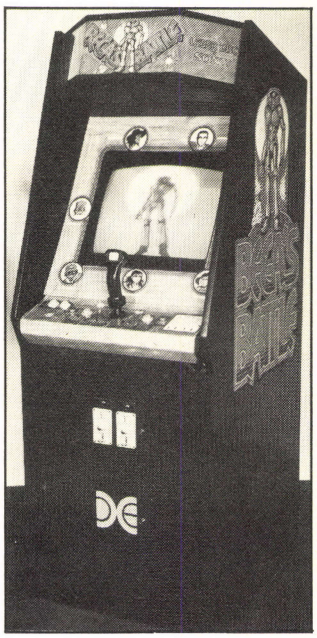
The nature of the movies is a news item in itself. Douglas Trumbull, partner in the venture, will be utilizing a process of his own invention called "Showscan." He describes it as "the highspeed projection of 70mm film on a giant screen," resulting in "dramatic realism, enhanced dimensionality, heightened clarity and brilliance, and a desired sense of involvement." And probably a burgeoning popcorn concession at ShowBiz.

The films will be produced by Trumbull's Entertainment Effects Group, which did the special effects for MGM's *Brainstorm.* The dimensional effects in that film were a prototype for the Showscan process.

YOU WATCH YOUR SCREEN—I'LL WATCH MINE

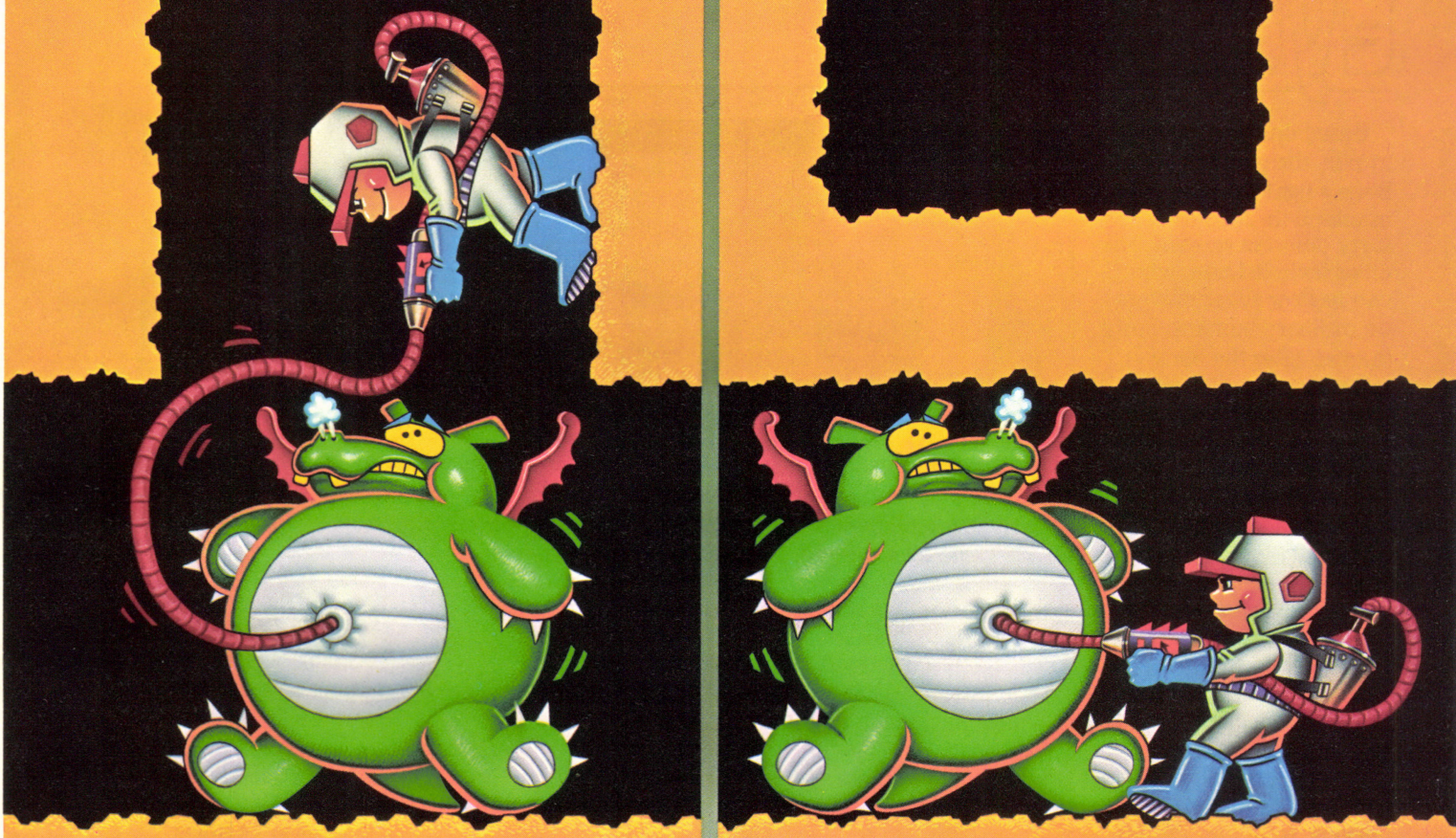
Showbiz's movies had better be good—at least two recently announced arcade games feature graphics luscious enough to make players ignore *Star Wars IV.*

Following *Dragon's Lair* into the laser disc game market—and doubtless preceding hundreds more entries—is *Bega's Battle.* Data East USA, Inc. claims that their game surpasses *Dragon's Lair* in giving the player "total control of the P.C.-generated characters with a level of playability not attained in the past."



Bega for more.

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*DIG DUG is created and designed by Namco Ltd., manufactured under license by Atari, Inc. Trademark and © Namco 1982.



Which is the best way to inflate your score?

Better find out. We've done our ground-work on DIG DUG so well, it plays just like it does in the arcade. So don't dig yourself a hole. Like the player on the left. Sure he'll score points for blowing up the Fygar™ in a vertical path. But blow up the Fygar in a horizontal path, like the player on the right, and score twice as many points. A landslide.

You can dig up even more points by uncovering a bonus veggie. But you get only one on each level. All you have to do is drop two boulders and you'll see it. Buried treasure disguised as a veggie.



Only Atari makes DIG DUG for the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems, and versions exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ Super-System and all ATARI Home Computers.

So get to your nearest store and dig into your pockets. For DIG DUG.

Here comes Dig Dug™* from Atari.®

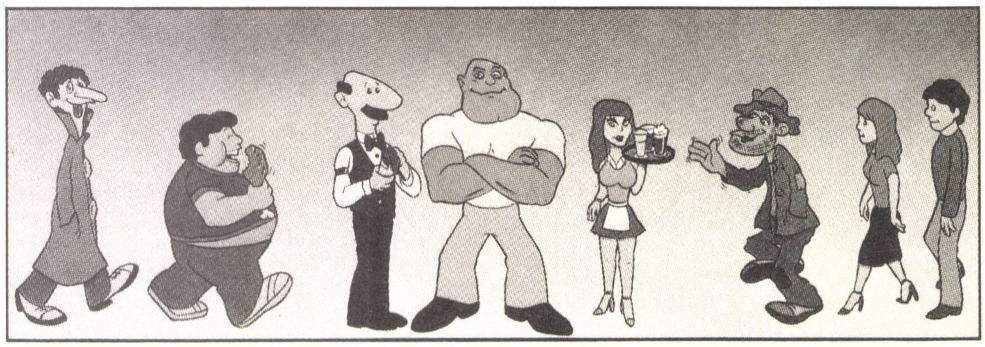
A Warner Communications Company

Based on an animated movie, the game follows Bega's fight to save mankind through over forty different screens. His allies include Luna, who can bestow super powers on ordinary humans; Sony (named after the Sony laserdisc machine inside the game?) who can teleport to the safety of other screens; Joe, who can activate a protective barrier; and the Indian, a turbaned strongman (shades of Punjab).

Once you've saved mankind, you can lower the stakes considerably with *Bouncer.* The object of the trackball-controlled title character is to eject undesirables, such as a drunk and a raincoated pervert, from four different drinking establishments. While doing this, you'll knock over tables, chairs, and people, and break windows. If you clean out a bar and have at least one paying customer left, you move on to the next bar.

Entertainment Sciences used a one million byte-equipped real-time image processor (RIP), a hardware item of their own invention, to put *Bouncer's* laserdisc like graphics on the screen. All seven main characters are fully animated on a 3D perspecitve play area. The game features a total of five hundred individual images (ten times what Entertainment Sciences claims is the arcade game norm) and a soundtrack with full speech and music.

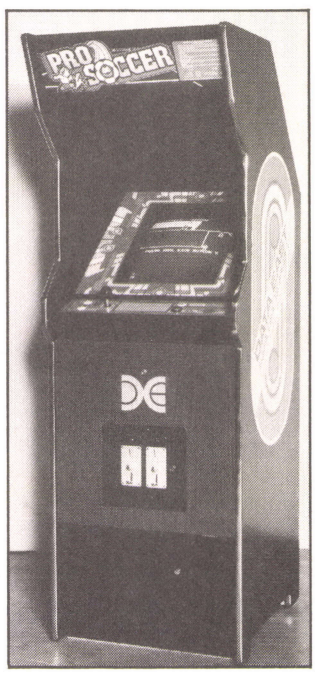
Passing the ball back to the aforementioned Data East USA, Inc., they tout their new *Pro Soccer* as "the most interactive sports game ever offered." Well—that's bombast-free enough for us. Not the greatest, or the most exciting—just the most interactive.



The Bouncer, center, poses with some of the characters he will be ejecting.

Which may prove to be a justified claim. The player controls all eleven members of his/her team, with the option of forward, lateral, long, short, and centering passes, sliding tackles, dribbling, and goal shots. The joystick manipulates players in eight directions on a 3D-view playfield.

In addition to taxing the gamer's hand-eye skills, *Pro Soccer* tests his/her strategy-making ability as (s)he must put together goal-scoring forward maneuvers and defend against the opposing team's challenges for the ball.



Kicks.

Also from DataEast comes *Cluster Buster,* which requires you to knock down piled-up items with a ricocheting ball. This is done with the joystick, aided by an angle change button. Pitfalls include holes in the ground and falling tarantulas

From the country that brought you all manner of deadly insects comes *Espial,* licensed out to Venture Line Inc. by Japan's G.G.I. Corporation. The player must combat the air force of the alien world Espial, using laser cannons and radar-controlled missiles. In the beginning the going is easy, but it gets progressively tougher, climaxing in the arrival of Espial's crack Green Angel Air Corps.

Venture Line has also signed on to manufacture and market *Hunchback,* a property of CVS Ltd. of England. With a joystick and jump button, the player guides Quasimodo as he attempts to rescue the princess Esmerelda.

IF YOU CAN'T BURY THE COMPETITION . . .

People haven't exactly been lining up ten deep to buy Atari 2600 cartridges, and the price of many games has dropped to four or five dollars, as low as two dollars in some super closeouts. But no one ever suggested that Atari couldn't give their games away.

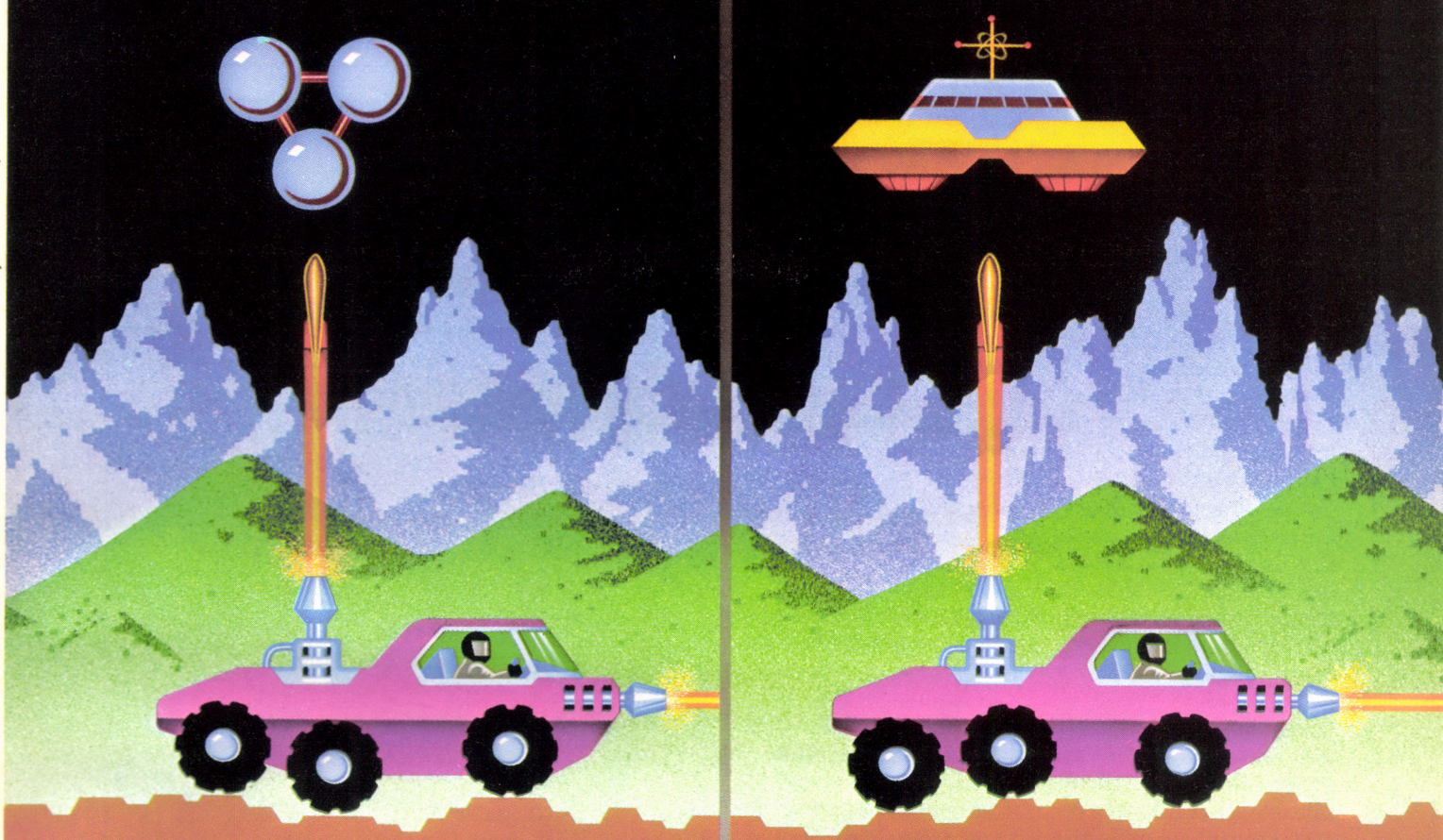
Until Atari did.

An Alamorgordo, N.M. city landfill was recently graced with some of the most expensive refuse in history: fourteen truckloads of brand-new Atari game cartridges and hardware.

The games came from Atari's El Paso plant, which has ceased the manufacture of videogames. Guards kept spectators out of viewing range as trucks buried the equipment in cement.

Reminds us of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath,* in which the orange grove owners pour kerosene over their surplus fruit so the starving Okies can't eat it. It might have been a nice gesture, especially this close to Christmans, to donate the unsaleable

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Which player is really firing up his score?

Think quick. The new home version of Moon Patrol looks so much like the arcade, it could fool the man in the moon. So don't find yourself in a crater. Like the player on the right. He'll get only 100 points for using his Moon Buggy to shoot down a Moon Strafer. While the player on the left will get twice as many points for shooting down a Crater Maker. A victory as great as the lunar landing.

Your score can wax even higher. You'll get 80 points every time your Moon Buggy jumps over a rock. But you'll get 100 points when you blow up a rock.



Only Atari makes Moon Patrol for the ATARI® 2600™ Game, Sears Video Arcade† systems, and a version exclusively for the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.

So get on your lunar module and scan your local moonscape for Moon Patrol.

Here comes Moon Patrol* from Atari®.

A Warner Communications Company

games to poor children. Many needy families own 2600s, especially now that they can be found for under $50 (and considerably less second-hand.)

Of course, Atari is hovering dangerously close to the poverty line themselves. And the cost of getting those games into worthy hands might have been prohibitive. But did Atari even look for a charitable organization that might handle the logistic? The Salvation Army, for example, or Toys for Tots? Both make free house calls in our neighborhood.

Atari says that, contrary to press accounts, the cartridges were defective, unsaleable, unusable. We'd prefer to believe that. Any other explanation gets us down in the dumps.

UNSELLIVISION

Mattel, Inc.'s latest press release reports a net loss of $156.1 million for the quarter ended July 30. (That's one press release we'd have mailed without a stamp.) Mattel blamed the loss on its Electronics segment, and announced plans to cut future losses by reducing significantly the size of the operation, scaling back new product development, reducing sales expectations, and curtailing marketing of the Aquarius home computer.

The Aquarius will be marketed only internationally. It was test marketed in two midwestern cities, and presumably didn't do well. Outside the USA, it will be up against less competition.

More gloom and doom: Activision, Inc. announced that, barring a sudden surge of orders, it will report a $3-5 million dollar loss for the current quarter.

And still more: Warner Communications, still reeling from the $310.5 second-quarter loss of its Atari division, has laid off one-third of its New York headquarters staff: 250 white collars. Atari's problems are compounded at the moment by a pending $13.6 million class action suit, charging that the company illegally concealed a previous round of scheduled layoffs from its workers.

In capitalism as in evolution, only the strongest survive. And Mattel, Activision, and Atari will have to flex some pretty hard marketing muscle to gain back the ground they've lost to Coleco.

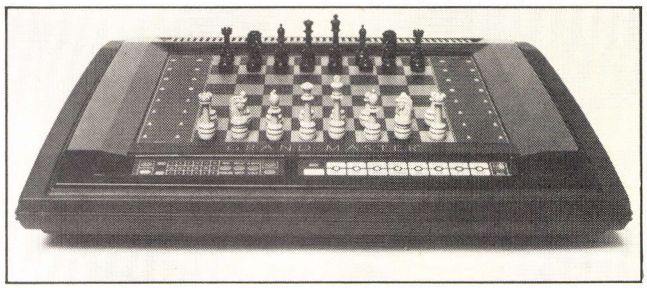
. . . AND A PLAYER TO BE NAMED LATER

First, the Phillies signed Pete Rose. Then, Don King signed Michael Jackson. And now The Games Network, Inc., has signed Broderbund, Inc., to a deal permitting them to use Broderbund's games in their cable service (reported on in our August issue).

Broderbund games scheduled to be transmitted include *Choplifter, David's Midnight Magic, Seafox, Serpentine, Apple Panic, Load Runner,* and *A.E.*

Other games makers signed to date include EduWare and Funtastic. Several others, a spokesperson said, have signed but have not yet been announced. (We happen to know that this latter group includes DataMost and Penguin.)

The Games Network is scheduled to go on-line in the first quarter of 1984—a much-revised projected date.







Top, the ghostly Grand Master Chess Computer offers twelve difficulty levels. The Cosmic Commander and Flight Commander controllers plug into the cart slot.

KNIGHT MOVES

Now the people who brought you the *Game of Life* have brought a game . . . *to* life. *Brrr.*

When you play Milton Bradley's *Grand-Master*

Continued on page 48

preview

E.C. Meade and Jim Clark Review The Latest Videogames.



Frostbite

Activision for the 2600

Object

Frostbite Bailey is trying to build an igloo at the top of the screen. To do this, he must jump from floe to floe as the neat rows of ice float across the screen.

Each chunk of ice Bailey touches causes that row to change color. It also adds a block to his igloo. When he has landed once upon each row of the screen, they change back to their original colors and he starts again. It takes more than one screen of floe-hopping to build an igloo.

When the igloo is built, Frostbite races inside for extra points.

Menacing Frostbite at different levels are Alaskan King Crabs, Snow Geese, Killer Clams, and Polar Grizzlies, all of whom will deep-six Mr. Bailey.

Meanwhile, you must also keep an eye on the thermometer. The longer Frostbite works, the colder it gets. When it reaches zero degrees, our hero freezes.

Gobbling down the fish which pass by on occasion warms things up and buys Bailey time.

The player begins the game with four Baileys. A new Frostbite is added every five thousand points, though you can accumulate no more than nine.

J.C.: Except for the sense of deja vu, I found this a wonderful game. Yes, the ice moving left-to-right and right-to-left in alternating rows is like *Frogger* and Activision's own *Freeway*. Yes, the changing colors of the ice blocks, and especially the accompanying sounds, are like *Q*Bert*.

But you get it all in one appealing game!

I like the fact that you can use the action button to change the direction of the ice floe on which you're standing—at the cost of a block of igloo ice—and the prowling Polar Grizzlies are as formidable a videogame foe as we've seen in quite a while.

I also am impressed by the ambience of the game: the colors are vivid and the design is so well done you'll *feel* the chill.

A solid, if not trailblazing game.

Graphics: B

Gameplay: B–

E.C.M: I can sum up *Frostbite* in one word: *eh!*

Frostbite is slow by the standards of *Enduro* and *River Raid* and just too patchwork to be effective. In trying to pack the excitement of *Q*Bert* and *Frogger* into one cartridge, Activision has failed to give it a distinctive look and feel of its own.

Remember *Megamania?* How that took the *Space Invaders* theme and carried it the next logical step?

Then there was *Pitfall,* which had movement and sweep.

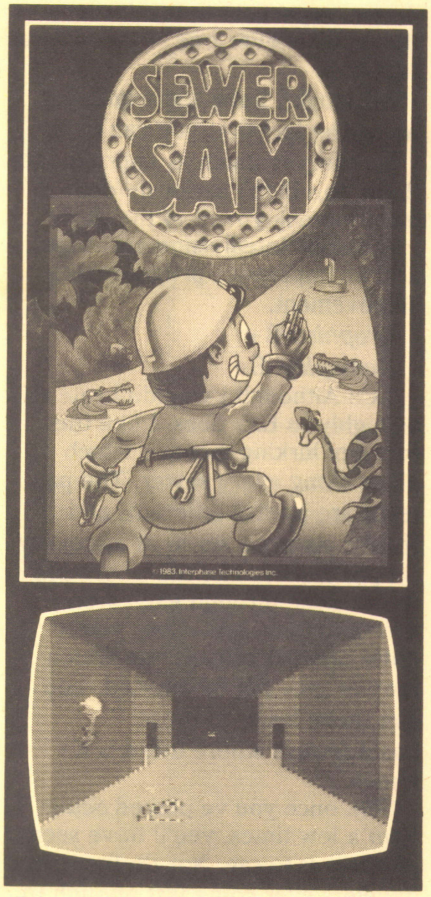
Even *Oink!,* which gave us *Breakout* in reverse.

Until recently, Activision was always thinking of a new approach, creating new "tunes" or working incredible "fugues" on old ones. *Frostbite* isn't so much a tune as a record which skips from groove to groove.

Activision is no longer evolving themes, it's putting them into a blender. This is yet another step in the company's surprising decline.

Graphics: C–

Gameplay: C–



Sewer Sam

Interplay for Intellivision

Object

Sewer Sam has to clear the city's sewers of various venomous creatures such as bats and snakes.

You are looking out from behind Sam's shoulder as he makes his way through the underground network. Nasties come at you from ahead, squirming low, flying high, poking up from the water through which you're sloshing. There are even enemy submarines lurking in the bowels of the city.

All you can do is fire at these various nemeses, or run to the walls and scale them until the danger passes.

E.C.M.: Interplay, a Canadian company, promises to have this

game and its companion available for ColecoVision and other systems soon.

I hope so. They do good work.

Sewer Sam is a computer-quality game, one of the few point-of-view cartridges on the market. The sewer walls scroll past realistically, and the creatures are all well animated. Sam himself is particularly well drawn, especially in his death throes whenever one of the villains tags him.

Although I have some quibbles about the fact that you can't aim your shots so much as approximate them, this didn't seriously detract from my enjoyment of the game.

A terrific Intellivision cartridge, and an impressive programming achievement.

Graphics: B+

Gameplay: B+

J.C.: Although I wouldn't rate this as highly as E.C. does, I like the sense of lurking menace which hides along every sewer. The patterns are always different, and there's always a sense of discovery.

I particularly like the doorways which poke through each sewer now and then, and allow you to enter another tunnel, one which may or may not be flooded. You can move faster in those passageways where there is no water.

Still, once you've played *Sewer Sam* a few times, you'll have seen all there is to see. Nor do the sewer dwellers ever come fast enough to make even *that* terribly exciting.

Unique, yes. Breathtaking, no. Good for cowards? The wall-hugger mode is tailor-made for players with a yellow streak. A welcome change of pace from the interminable *Dungeons & Dragons* type catacomb games? Without a doubt!

Graphics: B

Gameplay: C

Blockade Runner

Interplay for Intellivision

Object

You are in the cockpit of a space freighter, racing to your home world with vital supplies. But alien enemies have blocked the route; your only chance of getting through is to swerve through an asteroid belt.

Asteroids fly at your ship;



likewise robot space mines sent by the aliens and, finally, the aliens themselves. Each of these damages your vessel to varying degrees.

In addition to blasting these foes from the stars, you have deflector shields to help preserve you.

All the while you must keep an eye out for clouds of ice crystals. When the coolant for your ship's nuclear reactor runs out, you must replenish it or perish.

J.C.: I fear that *Blockade Runner* comes a little late in the day for either the space adventure craze or the *Star Trek / Star Voyager / Space Master / Star Raiders* line to have a commercial prayer.

A pity, since it's the best game of the lot and the only cartridge of its kind for Intellivision (discounting *Space Battle,* which offers only a fixed-position view).

The action in *Blockade Runner* is not only faster than fast, you command retrorockets which allow you to *shift* the action to the left, right, top, or bottom. That enables you to slide from the flow of enemies while shooting back.

The graphics are superb, and the sound effects resounding.

Moreover, the game can be set up so that one player controls the missiles, the other the ship's velocity and steering.

Now if only Interplay had done something with the Intellivoice . . .

Graphics: A

Gameplay: A–

E.C.: As Jim has said, this is a stupendous job on a tired theme, sort of like making the world's best Big Mac. What was exciting a few years ago just isn't exciting any more.

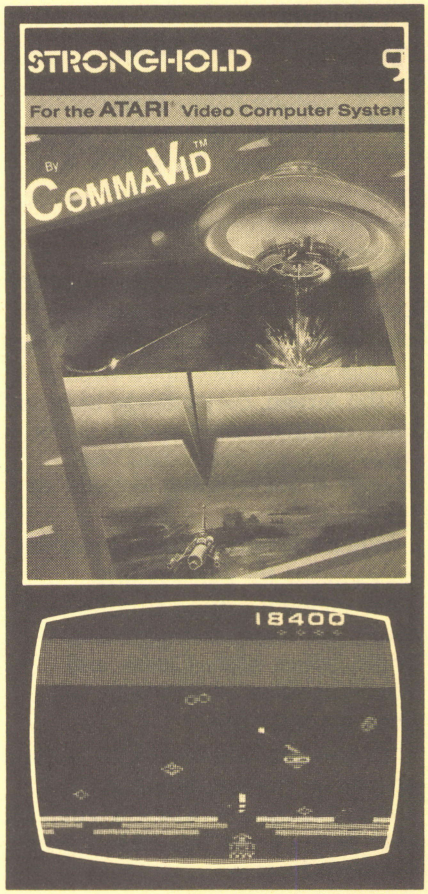
What Interplay *should* have done was get the rights to the Monty Python characters and done *Blockhead Runner,* something odd or perverse to breathe some life into the genre.

As it stands, *Blockade Runner* is state-of-the-art spacefaring in almost every way. Although I sometimes found the enemy objects difficult to tell apart due to the speed of their approach, the distraction was negligible.

I look forward to more games from this company. C'mon in, the water's evaporating.

Graphics: B+

Gameplay: B+



Stronghold
CommaVid for the 2600
Object

As an agent of space security, you must pilot your saucer over the surface of the asteroid Stronghold, where your job is to rid it of waste which floats through the atmosphere. Your gun can be turned 360 degrees for this purpose.

However, while there you discover a lethal Asteroid Crawler beneath three moving, energized Force Shields. The Shields must be picked apart while you try to blast a window through to the Crawler. Meanwhile, it can fire back at you.

In advanced levels, a Mega-Field slowly descends through the atmosphere of the asteroid, limiting by ever increasing chunks the room in which you have to maneuver.

E.C.M.: This is a lousy game. Apart from being yet another variation of Odyssey's *U.F.O.*—and not as flashy or exciting, I might add—*Stronghold* is far behind the state-of-the-art in videogaming. I can't help but believe that CommaVid is someone's tax writeoff.

The colors: drab. Gameplay: the ship is a pain to rotate. Only the debris itself are interesting, well-defined abstracts which have a nice, weightless quality to them.

Whoever designed this one must have been hibernating. Playing it, you will sleep too. Maybe they should change the name to ComaVid.

Graphics: D+
Gameplay: D–

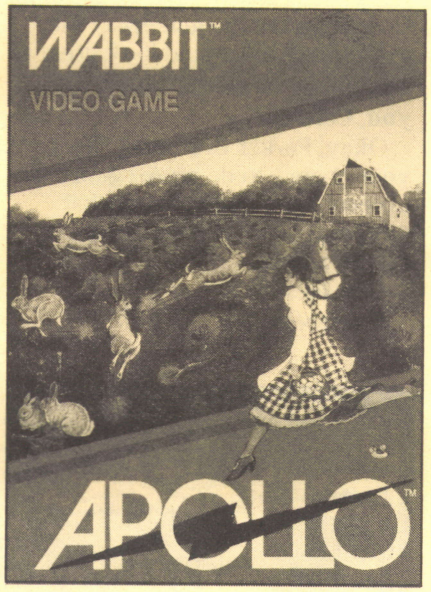
J.C.: Pro rating games has become E.C.'s most useless hobby. Comparing this to *U.F.O.* is pointless, since they are for different systems.

Taken on its own merits, *Stronghold,* as E.C. grudgingly hinted, is very strong on the antagonists. The debris follows your ship like a living shadow, and the Crawler is merciless gunning for you as soon as there's an opening in the three Shields. I'll admit that the player's weapon is clumsy to maneuver, and the fact that its effective range is a radius of less than an inch hampers enjoyment. CommaVid doesn't seem to realize that players like to blast the hell out of enemies, not wait until they're shoulder to shoulder to pick them off.

Graphics are sparse; a few stars in the sky might have been a nice touch.

I'm not recommending you spend more than twenty dollars; for *that* price, this is a good game.

Graphics: C+
Gameplay: C+



WABBIT
Apollo for the 2600
Object

As a farmer plagued by Rabbits, you are poised at the bottom of the screen awaiting each new onslaught. As the rabbits make their horizontal beelines, scurrying across your ten rows of crops, you must pelt them with rotten eggs.

Each rabbit you smack turns from white to yolk-yellow, and earns you points.

E.C.: This was Apollo's swan song—or rabbit song, as the case may be. The game received limited release before the company went under; we're reviewing it now only because stocks of Apollo games are showing up on the discount tables and you may be inclined to pick it up.

Don't.

This is a smeller in every sense of the word. The eggs travel with frustrating sloth; you get no more than two shots at each hare during any given pass. Moreover, if you stop a rabbit, the next rabbit will usually come from the same spot. Stop that one, and another appears, then another, until one succeeds. At that point, all the player needs to do is get a rhythm going.

Boring.

If the game had any charm, it might be worth a few bucks. But there's none of that either. Remember the neat little dance the chicken did when hit in U.S. Games' *Egg-O-Mania?* You won't see any of that here.

There is something telling in the fact that Apollo's last game is almost as bad as its first game, *Skeet Shoot.* Too bad they didn't see the writing on the wall.

Graphics: D–
Gameplay: D–

J.C.: I'm convinced that E.C. came down so hard on this game because the egg-slinging isn't lightspeed-fast. You actually have to aim, not always firing reflexively when a bunny first appears but tracking it and plugging the animal a beat later.

Be that as it may, there *are* flaws. This is a tough game for little kids, whose inability to time their shots will bag them few hares; it's also too deliberate for action fans, and just too one-dimensional for hardened videogamers. Novices will enjoy it, as well as those who don't mind a limited challenge, change-of-pace game for a few dollars.

Graphics: D
Gameplay: D+

ROCKY SUPER ACTION BOXING
Coleco for ColecoVision
Object

You take the part of either Rocky or Clubber Lang trying to beat your opponent insensate in three sixty-second rounds. The cartridge allows you to play the computer or another videogamer.

There are four basic maneuvers: right to head, right to body, left raised in defense, and duck.

Each round is a minute, and there are both Daze and Fatigue Indicators to show how weak or disoriented your boxer is becoming.

For use *only* with the new Super Controllers.

J.C.: I'm extremely disappointed with *Rocky* for a number of reasons. First, of the three boxing games, the



technical presentation is inarguably the best. The animation is astonishingly fluid and detailed, and the *Rocky* music is superbly done. However, for those qualities I could have rented *Rocky III* on videocassette.

The Intellivision boxing cartridge has all of the Coleco features *plus* the ability to "build" your own fighter, emphasizing strength, endurance, speed, etc. Here, the pugilists are evenly matched.

Activision's *Boxing* isn't as versatile *but* it allows you to hammer away relentlessly. It moves many times faster than either of the more "sophisticated" cartridges.

The *Rocky* figures cannot move around the ring as quickly as the characters in either of the other two games, nor can they leave their half of the ring!

The qualifier, of course, is that ColecoVision owners may not have the other units. In that case, this is worth owning for its novelty and mild entertainment value. Otherwise, skip it.

Graphics: A
Gameplay: C–

E.C.M.: This is the worst cartridge Coleco has created for its system. The boxers move as though they were sloshing through fudge. Where's the action, the speed, the guts?

Rocky only looks like a boxing game. It's really an excuse to show off Coleco's acumen with graphics. If the designers had organized their action elements with half the care that went into getting the *Rocky* title to crawl across Stallone's figure in the attract mode, this would have been a classic.

Someone took a dive on this one. Compromised the gameplay for something that would look great in ads and in the stores. Shame on you, Coleco.

Okay, Parker Brothers. This is your chance to do an Ali game for ColecoVision and show us that you're as good as your press releases insist.

Graphics: A
Gameplay: D



THUNDERGROUND
Sega for the 2600
Object

Commanding a subterranean tank, you must burrow up beneath six Vector nuclear bases located at the top of the screen. Placing your muzzle flush against each base in turn, you must blast them to atoms.

However, guarding the bases are a pair of Core Ranger Tanks. While you can obliterate each with a single shot, they can fire back and chase you into the tunnels you have excavated throughout the screen. Previously-launched shots survive the disintegration of each Core Ranger Tank.

E.C.M.: What a game! It's a shame Sega folded up its home videogaming tent without giving this one a push, because it's a sensational cartridge. But gutless business like that is the rule rather than the exception these days, a shame for seller and consumer alike.

Okay, there *are* superficial similarities to *Dig-Dug* and *Mr. Do!*, but this is a semi-clone with *muscle!* Crossing the corridor patrolled by the Core Ranger Tanks (CRTs, get it?) is a real challenge, as is escaping once you've blasted a base. (You can always abort a mission going *in*, but once committed *must* get out or get blasted.)

The graphics are nothing to write home about, but you really won't care. A bargain at any price.

Graphics: C
Gameplay: A

J.C.: I'm going to stop considerably short of calling *Thunderground* a masterpiece, but it *is* a thrilling game. For me, the sense of deja-vu detracted from its appeal, along with the sparse screen—a few underground landmines would have been nice. Also, in later levels the "dirt" disappears and you're playing on a barren black screen. While that gives the enemy Tanks more mobility, it eliminates the claustrophobic fun of waging a pitched battle within the confines of the maze of tunnels.

The chewing away of the earth is effective in the digging screens—it seems more particulate than the clumps which are devoured in the other burrowing games.

E.C. describes this as a semiclone of *Mr. Do!* or *Dig-Dug*, but with *muscle*. What she really means is *violence*, but I don't think anyone will be too bothered.

Very good stuff, but far short of greatness.

Graphics: C+
Gameplay: B



OMEGA RACE

Coleco for ColecoVision

Object

As a starship commander in deep space, you must navigate your Omega craft around the screen and vaporize enemy Droids before they can mutate into Death Ships.

The field is weightless: in addition to your own thrust powers, your ship, if it hits the sides of the screen, will bounce off with equal force.

There are options which include a Tunnel (center of the screen) and Astro Gates (top and bottom) which can be used to sneak up on the enemy.

The screen is also littered with Vapor Mines and Photon Mines, deposited by Death Ships which have been around for longer than Omega Command would have preferred.

J.C.: Although this arcade game was out at the height of the *Asteroids* craze, the thrust-spin-fire theme is tired by now. Indeed, if you've got Coleco's *Space Fury*, you've got all you need along those lines.

There *are* unique aspects of this game. The course is a rectangular doughnut, the center of which can't be fired through or traversed, which makes it useful defensively, a bother offensively. Also, the rubber walls are not to be taken lightly: they can fling you where you don't particularly want to go, or be used in a surprise offensive rebound into a heavily populated area.

But it isn't enough to make this worth thirty dollars.

Graphics: C

Gameplay: C

E.C.M.: Sometimes, Jim shocks me. What he's saying, in essence, is that if you've already tasted apples, stay away from apple pie since the only difference is some sugar and flour.

Omega Race is like playing four-wall handball. Granted, *Asteroids* et al got a little crazy when you over-thrusted and had to avoid collisions. But this game throws you at right angles into other walls that throw you ninety degrees in some *other* direction.

Jim's correct in ascribing plusses and minuses to this attribute. But mastering it all, while simultaneously having to do-in your adversaries before they start metamorphosing and dropping mines, is videogaming at its best.

No needlessly flamboyant graphics here, thank goodness; just great fun!

Graphics: B–

Gameplay: A



WORM WHOMPER

Activision for Intellivision

Object

Felton Pinkerton's got a problem. There are waves of Inchworms, Snails, Slugs, Moths, Snakes, Millipedes, Caterpillars and other vermin moving from the right in order to eat the ten stalks of sweet, golden Corn on the left.

Corn dies upon contact with any bug other than an Inchworm. It changes color the first time an Inchworm touches it; the Corn dies the second time the insect gets it.

Felton has three means of beating a bug. Spraying it with his unlimited amount of Pesticide, he can stop Inchworms with one blast, Snails with two, Moths with three, and so on (not necessarily in succession; hits are cumulative). He can loose a Plough Ball, of which he has three per wave; these mow down every bug in their path. Finally, he can hit and destroy any insect with his Spray Gun. Doing that, however, Felton must get a new one from the Tool Shed at the bottom of the screen, wasting valuable time.

The bugs come at different angles, from straight to diagonal. The Moths lay Eggs, which others can hide behind to avoid Felton's assault; these can be removed with Plough Balls.

E.C.M.: Don't look for my name among the ranks of the Worm Whompers club; there's no reason to take pride in the achievement. I scored the required 75,000 points right quick, and so should you. I'd have done it faster if I weren't yawning.

On the one hand, this is *Missile Command* turned on its side: instead of cities you're protecting Corn. However, you don't have to sight and fire: this game's just another slide-and-shoot. In fact, after a few waves there are so many bugs that you'll be moving from top to bottom without ever taking your finger from the action button. Some fun, eh?

Incidentally, the insects are quite realistic, especially the Inchworms. If you don't like little crawling things, all the more reason to stay away from *Worm Whomper*.

Another step toward limbo for Activision.

Graphics: C

Gameplay: D

J.C.: I took my licks, now it's time for E.C. to get hers: never have I

read a more limited review.

To wit: she doesn't take into account the fact that scatter spraying only kills half the bugs on the field at best (you've got to do some precision shooting to get the rest); that your Corn has a way of dying fast whenever you've lost your Spray Gun and must fetch another (it happened to me more than once in high five figure play); and to hit a vermin three times before it reaches your Corn is not just a matter of firing three short bursts, since they tend to move diagonally.

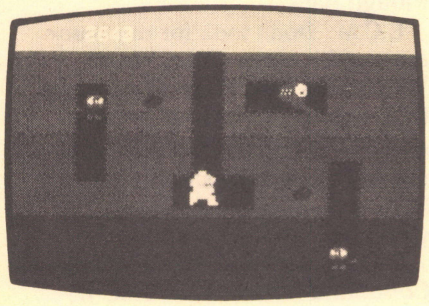
In other words, Activision may have (intentionally?) set too low a score to join their Worm Whomper's club, but very few players are going to penetrate far into six figures without a *lot* of practice.

The cartoony graphics of the field contrast dramatically with the truly offensive nature of some of the wrigglers, but it's a nice (if disgusting) visual balance.

A novel game for Intellivision, and a good game from the one-time champs of cartridge design.

Graphics: B+

Gameplay: B



DIG-DUG

Atari for the 5200

Object

Burrow your hero through the sands earning points as you dig and collect valuable vegetables. In the meantime, you must harpoon, pump, and explode various subterranean demons before they eat you.

These evil Pookas and Fygars dwell in narrow tunnels and can't leave them until you penetrate a wall thereof, or so much time has passed that they are permitted to flee.

Each round is completed when the four or more monsters have been slain or are able to wander off the side of the screen.

(Editor's note: please see *VCI #4* for a complete guide to conquering *Dig-Dug.*)

J.C.: This is a wonderful cartridge. The limited range of your harpoon, the dirt-penetrating fire breathed by the Fygars, and the fact that when your enemies leave their tunnels they can cut diagonally across the screen—not just in a straight line—makes this more entertaining by far than *Mr. Do!* over at Coleco.

The graphics are not as detailed as seasoned diggers might like. The variegated earth colors are all there, but the figures themselves are only a shadow of what they are in the arcades. Particularly disappointing is that after all the pumping of the nasties you don't get a distinctive 'pop' the way you do in the arcade.

Nonetheless, your journey into the underworld will be a very satisfying one. Admittedly, the rendering of each character is spare. Players may have to rely on memories of the arcade game to provide characterization. But what the heck—it's a cartoon.

Graphics: C

Gameplay: B

E.C.M.: What I've always appreciated most about *Dig-Dug* is that you can pump the demons and then release them. Tactically, that stuns the creature and buys you time—time for the others to make their way to your position. When that happens, you can drop a rock on the lot of them and earn big points.

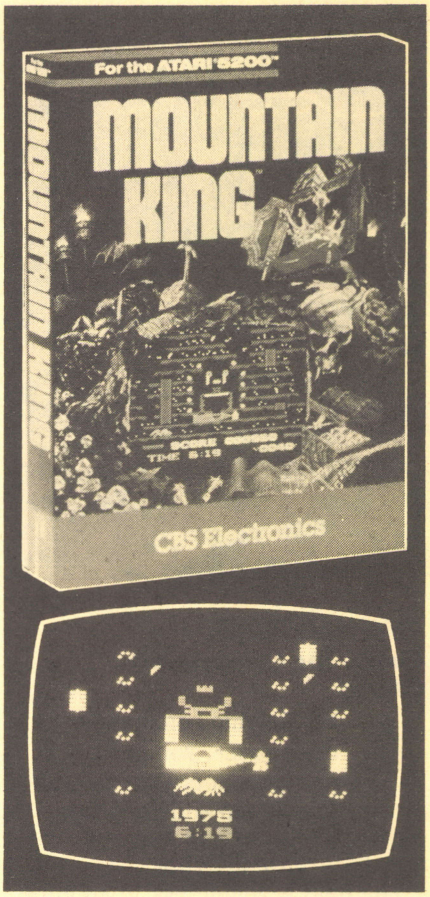
That wonderful strategic capacity is still here, but the game has other flaws.

I feel more strongly than Jim that the characterization in this home version detracts from one's enjoyment. I can live with the horizontal stretch of the game vs. the vertical stretch in the arcades; and the soil underground is indeed every bit as detailed as the original *Dig-Dug.* But that little white 'thing' moving around the screen isn't Dig-Dug, those blobs of color aren't Pookas and Fygars, and the swelling of the creatures is unacceptably jerky.

Novices will enjoy the game; seasoned gamers will simply settle for it.

Graphics: C–

Gameplay: B–



MOUNTAIN KING

CBS for the 2600

Object

Deep within a long-lost diamond mine are level after level of gems—and, somewhere within, the Temple Chamber of a forgotten civilization. In this Chamber is a Golden Crown which, while worth a fortune, can only be had once the player has found and captured the Flame Spirit and offered it to the Skull Spirit which guards the treasure. The Flame Spirit only appears once the player has collected enough diamonds.

As the clock runs down, among the other challenges facing the player in her/his quest to become the Mountain King are, first, collecting enough diamonds to enable the Flame Spirit to appear; snaring the elusive spectre; eluding Cave Bats, which can steal the Flame Spirit; and the Giant Spider which snares you in its web and, if you take too long escaping, eats you.

Even after you get the Crown, if you don't climb all the way back to the mountaintop before time runs out or Cave Bats steal your find, the game ends.

E.C.M.: In a phrase, this is the best quest game I've played since Atari's *Adventure.*

What distinguishes a good game of this type from a great one is the random generation of characters, the complexity of the maze—or, in this case, an endlessly high mountain whose levels and pitfalls require Herculean jumps—and the unusual nature of the search.

In the case of *Mountain King,* there is little concern for graphics: everything's gameplay. You race to collect diamonds as fast as possible, leap at—and invariably miss—other levels, run like a lunatic to avoid the Spider, and start to huff in annoyance as the Flame Spirit proves elusive (it is visible only when you shine your flashlight where there's a hint of flame).

Particularly entertaining, if frustrating, is the fact that falling off certain ledges can drop you for more levels than even *exist* in most games. You won't die upon finally striking ground, you'll just be dazed . . . while the clock ticks away.

Though you never get to build up a real head of steam as you do running through the mazes in *Adventure* or the much-underrated *Haunted House, Mountain King* is a grand escape and an innovative challenge.

Graphics: D

Gameplay: B+

J.C.: I appreciate E.C.'s enthusiasm as far as the scope of the game is concerned, for the mountain is indeed many-leveled. For me, however, it was just a slightly more convoluted version of the climb-and-duck *Donkey Kong* motif. I'm all for fleshing-out games, mind you—but this stuff is mere padding. Whatever you do, you're still jumping and running: in *Adventure,* there were times when you had to go and find a spear, stop to slay a dragon, rush out and get a bridge to ford walls. In short, there was variety.

What's here is good, but not *so* unique that you're going to have hour after hour of fun.

Incidentally, It would have been fitting if, somewhere in their instruction booklet, CBS had credited the game's famous *Hall of the Mountain King* music to Norwegian composer Edward Grieg.

Graphics: D

Gameplay: C



SPACE SHUTTLE

Activision for the 2600

Object

You are in command of the *Discovery* in this true-to-life simulation of a Shuttle mission. After liftoff, during which you help mission control run the engines and manage trajectory, you enter orbit. There, with the help of your guages and viewport, you must find and dock with a satellite. Afterwards, it's time to deorbit and, keeping the Shuttle on an even keel, you must bring it in for a landing on earth.

J.C.: From the moment dawn breaks over Cape Canaveral, to the time the runway slips under your wheels, you are in the grip of a remarkable cartridge.

No shooting, no killing, no enemies: just the pilot, his/her craft, and a 'routine' space rendezvous. Your attention is held by the constant onslaught of information about pitch and yaw, about the amount of fuel remaining, about the location of the satellite, by the sequence of events which bring you safely up and return you to earth in one place.

Activision has taken what would otherwise be a static view from the cockpit window and filled it with the colors, sights, and sounds of space. There's really a sense of adventure when you plug in this game; a chance for grownups to recapture the sense of play that vanished when they folded away the cowboy suit and holster.

This is a landmark game, not only in terms of its unique gameplay, but as an entertaining and sophisticated learning tool. I wish Activision success with *Space Shuttle.*

Graphics: A

Gameplay: A

E.C.M.: I think the cold reality and by-now "commonplace" nature of the Space Shuttle is going to put a lot of consumers off. That's too bad, because this game has all the Right Stuff.

In addition to the attributes mentioned by Jim—and I agree with his lavish praise—the instruction manual provides an illustrated guide to what's happening outside your craft while you're stuck with the view from your command chair.

I also like the codebook section of the manual, which adds to the verisimilitude of the game.

Our space program, too-long neglected by the dolts in Washington, deserves a boost. Hopefully, this videogame will help to provide it.

(Editor's note: please refer to VCI # 5 to see what a Space Shuttle astronaut had to say about videogames.)

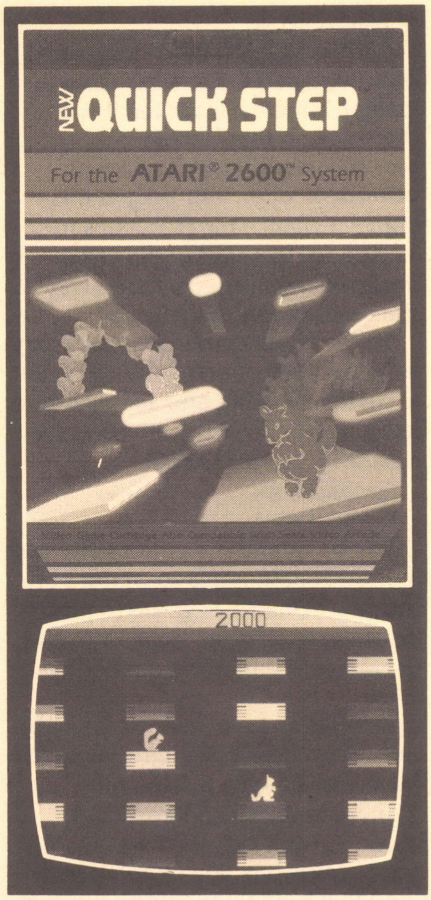
QUICK STEP

Imagic for the 2600

Object

A one or two player game in which a Kangaroo and Squirrel hop from Mat-to-Mat collecting points.

Jumping around a scrolling field, the animals try to accomplish several things: to change each Mat to their own color by hopping on it; to make sure it remains that color until the Mat scrolls off the bottom of the screen; to hit Magic Mats, which paralyze your opponent; to make a limited number of Mats disappear, thus trapping your adversary on a Mat which is scrolling off the screen (thereby destroying that animal's life); and to land



on a Gold Mat, which empowers you to make more Mats disappear.

Animals can jump up and down and from side to side. Points are scored when you are the first to change a fresh Mat to your color, and a Mat your color scrolls off the screen.

J.C.: An appealing variation of *Q*Bert.* The mats move fast, and because of their speed it's necessary to stay on your toes.

There is a good deal of business to watch out for in *Quick Step:* the special-colored Mats, trying to trap your opponent, watching that *you* don't get paralyzed on a vanishing level of Mats, and making certain as many Mats as possible are your color. Too, the computer plays a mean game, taking the part of the Squirrel and running your Kangaroo ragged.

Visually, the game is way below par. There is no characterization at all, and the screen is pale-colored Mats on black. Not very appealing, that. Imagic has opted to pack speed and real rivalry into this game. If you don't mind bare bones scenery, you'll have fun.

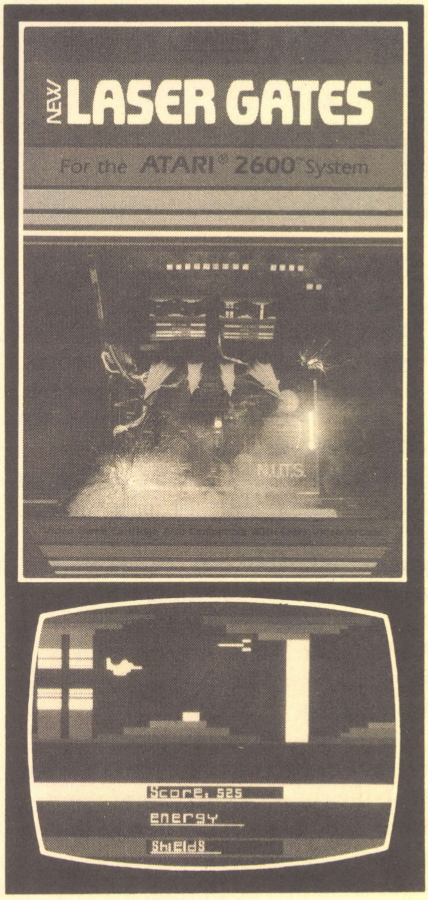
Graphics: D+
Gameplay: B–

E.C.M.: Unlike *Q*Bert, Quick Step* is a needlessly convoluted game. The problem is that it would work great on an arcade screen, where you've got the height to execute real strategies. In this game, the Mats scroll from the bottom of the screen before you can really get any strategies cooking.

The problem, of course, goes beyond the size of the screen. The game is fundamentally ill-conceived. Imagic has tried to combine the *Q*Bert* theme with the intellectualism of an *Othello.* Unfortunately, it doesn't gel. It's like trying to play Chess with your royal pieces constantly being lost as the bottom of the board scrolls away.

Frenzy can be a neat quality in a game like *Venture.* But there's very little point to *Quick Step* other than to make players crazy.

Graphics: D
Gameplay: D+



LASER GATES

Imagic for the 2600

Object

The Cryptic Computer, a system for maintaining peace throughout the galaxy, has malfunctioned. All the fail safe systems designed to protect the Computer in its peaceful mode now keep humankind from disarming it in its rebellious mode.

If four Detonators inside the labyrinthine computer are not destroyed, the computer will blow up the galaxy.

The heroic Dante Dart is sent to spiral through the Forcefields, Radar Mortars, Homing Missiles, Rock Munchers, and other obstacles to pick off the Detonators.

E.C.M.: Whatever possessed Imagic to dish up another *Vanguard, Cosmic Avenger, Flash Gordon* game is anyone's guess. They did manage to give the *Space Invaders* theme new life with *Demon Attack* a few years back, but their muse has failed them here. Miserably.

Let's just say that there is little new in *Laser Gates.* To say anything more would be unnecessarily cruel to this fast-sinking company.

Graphics: D+
Gameplay: D

J.C.: E.C.'s basic complaint is a fair one. This is another horizontal shoot-em-up with too few new twists: the Flexing Forcefield—a scrolling wall with a narrow gap for safe passage; the Computer Wall in which you must shoot a tunnel; walls which vanish and reappear to impede your progress; it's all been done to death.

Having to shoot out the pins of the Detonators is a clever device, but it's not enough to justify buying the cartridge. Even the graphics are weak. How Imagic could do such an innovative and spectacular job on *Moonsweeper* and fail so dramatically with *Laser Gates* is one of those Great Mysteries of Life. However, it's beginning to look like Imagic won't have to worry about honoring those two year limited warranties on its cartridges . . . .

Graphics: D–
Gameplay: D

MICRO TAKES

Donkey Kong Jr.
Coleco for Intellivision

Object: Scurry a little ape up vines and chains, avoiding roving jaws and destructive birds to reach the top of the screen and free the imprisoned Donkey Kong.

J.C.: A very colorful but unsatisfying game. The graphics are merely okay; worse, there's actually a

Continued on page 74

by the editors of VCI



Photo. Ross M. Horowitz.

ADAM BOMB?

Could a brilliantly conceived product spell disaster for Coleco?

Having somehow got wind of VCI's cover story for this issue, a fictional reader stormed the offices of Ion International and demanded an explanation. What follows is the account of the fictional confrontation that ensued.

Outraged Reader: What's this **?!!$ about an Adam bomb? Have you closely examined the Adam computer?

VCI: No, we haven't. Not yet.

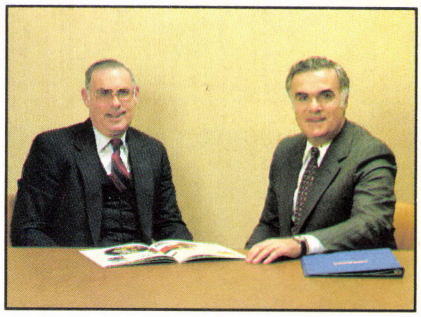
OR: And you're condemning it? Who are you going after next? UNICEF?

VCI: Calm down. Have a danish. This is not a hardware review. If the Adam does what Coleco claims it will do—and we have grave doubts about that but are willing to be convinced—it should be marvelous. We're simply afraid that, on a marketing level, Coleco may be headed for disaster on this one.

OR: Disaster? They're offering a stepped keyboard, daisy wheel printer, mass memory drive that will store 80K, built-in word processor, a game port for their incredibly popular ColecoVison games, a *Buck Rogers* supergame—and they're offering it all for six hundred dol—



Smile when you say "Adam."



The gamblers: Leonard (left) and Arnold Greenberg of Coleco.

VCI: Seven hundred.
OR: What?
VCI: The suggested retail price has already been upped to seven hundred dollars.
OR: Whatever. It's a heckuva bargain.
VCI: Agreed. The industry press, this magazine included, has trumpeted the Adam as God's gift to computing. To owners of ColecoVision, certainly it is more computer than they could reasonably ask for. Understand, we admire and respect Coleco. We hope that Adam goes through the roof for them.
OR: You certainly have an odd way of showing your good wishes, you hypocrite.
VCI: Hey, lighten up. Our publisher, Michael Schneider, is not from Missouri, but he coins that state's slogan in his appraisal of the Adam's chances: Show Me. If Coleco can deliver all they promise for easily a third to a half of what other companies are currently charging (including Commodore, who has never been shy of cutting prices), then fine. If they can keep it serviced and software-supported, wonderful. But Coleco has to expect some skepticism. They have to expect to be scrutinized very closely.
OR: They *have* shown the Adam. At the Electronics Show in Chicago, to leading editors, to the infamous Boston Computer Society a few weeks ago . . .
VCI: And each time they've shown it, glitches have surfaced.
OR: Big deal. A machine of any complexity is going to have to be debugged.
VCI: Granted. But time is running out on Coleco. Face it, they made exorbitant claims, set a schedule for themselves that they couldn't possibly meet. I don't think you realize what an incredible gamble they've taken with Adam.
OR: Sounds like a sure thing to me.
VCI: You are wrong, byte breath. For example, they have shut down production of ColecoVision units to concentrate on Adam. Yes, I know they have a warehouse full of ColecoVisions stockpiled, but that only serves to illustrate the breadth of the gamble. If ColecoVision units sell well during Christmas, then Coleco is in danger of running out of them, falling behind—serious damage. If the units don't sell, then Coleco has inventory problems, cash flow problems—serious damage. The company is practically at a standstill, except for the Adam project. They're throwing everything they've got into the thing; double shifts are working to debug Adam and assemble the units. They've promised retailers around the country a half a million Adams by the end of the year. The retailers are dying for them.
OR: Sounds good to me. Can I use your phone? Contact my broker. Buy Coleco!
VCI: Wait. Eat your danish. The problem is: Adam is already late. It looks as if Coleco may have already missed the Christmas season.
OR: That doesn't sound good.
VCI: It isn't. As of this writing, Coleco is still claiming that they will ship a good percentage of their 500,000 Adams by mid-October. Many people doubt that, with good reason. Analysts have been saying for months that shipping half a million units from the Coleco facilities was an unreal goal; the slightest problem could topple the entire plan. It is beginning to look as if that has happened. They are apparently having more problems than they anticipated with the mass memory drive. It was not as durable as it needs to be and the digital datapacks were not performing as required. Those problems have been cleared up now, but the process cost them a crucial two months.
OR: I heard that at the demonstration in Boston in September Adam responded beautifully.
VCI: That was a carefully orchestrated demonstration. Later, Bob Davis, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal,* tinkered with the unit and found some glitches in the word processor function. Apparent-

ly, in the debugging process, Coleco had to sacrifice some editing functions. It is difficult to move blocks of text higher on the screen, difficult to mark text that is off the screen, and a few other minor complaints. But—now sit still and listen to this—but when Davis pressed them, Coleco executives admitted that a "utility pack" would be needed to make Adam's word processor function perfectly, professionally. That utility pack will cost an additional thirty dollars or so, and won't be available until early next year. **(The Outraged Reader said nothing, but only sat glumly picking sesame seeds out of his danish.)**

I got sidetracked. I was talking about the damage to Coleco if they can't ship enough Adam units in time for Christmas. The retailers are looking at empty shelves, you see, and getting very nervous. Today we heard reports that a million dollars worth of orders (supposedly uncancellable) on Coleco products have been cancelled. Though many disagree—Coleco included—Wall Street analysts estimate that for every month that delivery of Adam is delayed past the initial September 1 target date, Coleco will lose sales of 100,000 units. Consider that each of those lost unit sales represents—what?—the loss of five, ten software purchases in the years to come. But that's looking far down the road. If Coleco loses Christmas, they may never recover.

OR: Now just hold it right there. You're overdoing it with this Christmas thing. Computers aren't tinsel or Santa beards! With a product as strong and as attractively priced as Adam, they'll make up the sales next year.

VCI: We hope you're right, we really do. But if the retailers are forced to run around at the last minute frantically filling up shelf space they had reserved for Adam—are they likely to reorder from Coleco next year? Coleco is losing credibility within the industry and with consumers by making promises they can't keep.

OR: If the Adam is a winning product, the retailers will carry it.

VCI: You have a chicken/egg dilemma there, but I'll pass on dissecting it. I'd rather discuss the competition for all that shelf space.



The American Dream come true! From leather goods to pools to the world's top videogame maker—Coleco, this is your life!

The world is anxiously awaiting the Peanut from IBM, for example.

OR: Poor example. The Peanut (if it is released soon which I doubt because IBM won't want to undercut sales of their runaway bestselling PC) will sell for around $1200. Different ballpark.

VCI: That's very good. Are you a spy for one of the other magazines? Still, IBM has become a major force in the industry without even trying. And the force will be with us, always.

OR: Cute.

VCI: Seriously: the IBM name represents permanence, reliability. They're not going anywhere, they're not going out of business. They don't gamble either. They play the game as carefully as possible. And don't discount Atari. They've got Alan Alda (who doesn't believe *him?*) and he's hawking a system comparable to Adam in capability and price. And, while both the Adam and Atari's 600XL are late to market, look to good old Timex Sinclair to fill the void. They managed to grab a huge share of the market with that glorified calculator, the 1000. Now they're releasing their 2068 with 64K and a system price lower than Adam. But divide up the market any way you like. Remember that the impulse buyers, many of them, already own computers. The careful ones remain. A lot of careful people will wait for, and spend a little more money for, a careful machine from a careful company.

OR: Of all the oversimplified, under-researched bull . . .! Let's look at the facts, shall we? Fact: Coleco has proven that they are innovative and that their marketing skills are second to none. They have proven that they can beat the big guys (Atari, Mattel) at their own game. They have proven that they can satisfy customers—ColecoVision owners are ecstatic! They are aggressive, they are determined to hold a dominant position in the consumer electronics industry. Look: they just signed a deal with AT&T for a phone-transmitted games and information service, they copped the hot *Dragon's Lair* license, they make games for other systems, hand-held games, you name it! They know what they're doing!

VCI: We won't underestimate them if they will agree not to exhibit overconfidence. For example, "hand holding" is becoming a crucial aspect of the purchase of a computer, from the consumer's point of view. Many sales are lost because salesmen are not trained properly to answer questions; much good will is lost because salesmen do not follow up the sale with advice and guidance. Well, Arnold Greenberg, president of Coleco, appeared on the TV show *The Wall Street Journal Report*—

OR: What is it with you and the *Wall Street Journal?*

Continued on page 71

The Electronic Pizza

By Craig Shaw Gardner

Quick! What's over five feet high, with big ears and grey fur, wears a derby hat and runs a restaurant?

Well, I didn't know the answer until recently, but my five year old niece could tell you all about it. We're talking about Chuck E. Cheese.

The Chuck E. Cheese Pizzatime Theaters are part of a growing trend that combines fast food restaurants with video arcades. Other chains, such as Showbiz Pizza and Gadgets, are also riding the video food bandwagon, but Chuck E. Cheese, with over two hundred outlets in the U.S., Canada, Australia and Hong Kong (and plans for dozens more), is by far the largest. The brainchild of Nolan Bushnell, the inventor of *Pong* and the man behind the early days of Atari, Chuck E. Cheese restaurants are set up like Mini-Disneylands, with a lot of different things to do, and a lot of different ways to spend your money.

When you walk into a Chuck E. Cheese, the first thing you encounter is noise. First, it's the noise of excited kids, bouncing from room to room, their bewildered parents trailing after them. The place is full of play areas, skee ball and bowling games, kiddie rides and video monitors. And that's just the front hallway. Set back from this common area are the videogame room and eating areas.

I came with another adult on my first trip to a Pizzatime Theater. We walked slowly across the front hallway, careful not to bump into any small people. After some delicate maneuvering and a close call or two, we reached the order desk. The desk looks pretty much like any other fast food chain, with microphones to call the orders back into the kitchen. The employees, mostly teenagers working part-time, all wear Chuck E. Cheese derby hats. You can order pizza or subs, all rather more expensive than your typical fast food chain. A large pizza with anything more than cheese costs well over ten dollars.

We ordered a small pizza. The order person gave us a number and said it would show up on the video monitor when the pizza was ready. We were also given a couple of "free" game tokens, included in the pizza price. The larger the pizza you order, the more tokens you receive. The tokens showed a picture of Chuck E. Cheese, a rodent with a derby hat, and the words "In Pizza We Trust."

Well, we had tokens, and we had time on our hands. The videogame room beckoned.

The room looked much like a video arcade in any suburban mall. There were no pinball machines, only electronic games. No *Dragon's Lair,* but they did have most of the basics: *Q*Bert, Donkey Kong,* the *Pac-mans,* etc. I ran out of my tokens before the pizza was ready. So, of course, I got some more, four for a dollar, out of the token machine. Four for a dollar, just like quarters, except, of course, that you have to spend Chuck E. Cheese tokens inside a Chuck E. Cheese.

A couple more rounds of *Q*Bert,* and our order was ready. Our number "68" flashed large on the video monitor. We went to retrieve our pizza.

This presented us with our next problem. Where do you eat amidst all this noise? You see, *all* of Chuck

E. Cheese is noisy with music, and electronics, and the voices of kids.

We settled on eating in the Lounge.

There are three or four different eating areas in every Chuck E. Cheese. In this particular restaurant, the Lounge seemed quietest. The room was long and narrow, filled with booths and tables, most large enough to seat big families or birthday party groups. And in the center of the room was a stage, on which stood an eight foot tall lion in a sequined jump suit. The lion's name was, of course, "The King," and he sang Elvis Presley songs.

All the restaurant rooms in a Chuck E. Cheese have these robots, who provide entertainment as you eat. The King, in a way, seemed like a giant, moving jukebox. A sign to one side of the stage informed us: "To Start the Show, Insert a Game Token Here." When you put your token in the slot, the stage lights up and the Lion looks out over the audience, and tells us that this song is dedicated to someone special "out there." (Q*Bert maybe?) The robot then proceeds to strum its guitar, open and close its mouth, and move its head and eyes as the sound system plays some hit Elvis record such as "Guitar Man" or "Heartbreak Hotel." At song's end, the robot will humbly thank the audience, then say "I'd be nothing without you." Down go the lights. Back to our pizza.

Chuck E. Pizza is not that bad. It's not that good, either, but it was better than the corporate concept pizzas I've had in the past: Pizza Hut, whose products often seemed to taste more like whatever preservatives they used rather than what food they were shaped to resemble; or Shakey's, whose pizza tasted like nothing so much as reconstituted wood shavings. Chuck E. Cheese Pizza, on the other hand, is bland and inoffensive, rather like Chef Boy-ar-dee, fresh from the oven. I suspect that the blandness of the pizza is quite carefully planned. When I was six years old, I thought Chef Boy-ar-dee products were right up there with Hostess Twinkies as some of the great foods of the Western World.

And everything at Chuck E. Cheese is geared for the kids. The restaurants are billed as "family entertainment centers," and are designed to have diverse enough attractions to appeal to children ranging from toddlers on up to those in their mid-teens. And "family centers" describes them exactly. Every group of kids must be accompanied by someone over the age of eighteen. So there are always adults around to keep things under control, or at least that's the theory.

Having finished our pizza, and listened to the King sing half a dozen songs, we moved on to inspect the other rooms. The Cabaret had an elephant that played the synthesizer, and sang songs in a Betty Boop voice. This robot sang a medley of show tunes with rewritten lyrics, so that now all the songs were, of course, about the circus.

But the biggest room in the restaurant is the real Chuck E. Cheese Pizzatime Theater. It featured a five piece robot band, animated from the waist up, with female mouse back-up singers to one side. This was the "birthday party" room, and it was full of long tables, each one occupied by ten or



Would you buy a pizza from this rodent? Street-wise, New Jersey-born Chuck E. Cheese already has over two hundred outlets.

more kids, who more or less listened to Chuck E. and company sing a song about "I'm glad it's your birthday, because it's my birthday, too."

Birthday parties are big business at Chuck E. Cheese, and we found brochures available at the Chuck E. Cheese concession stand, where you can buy Chuck E. Cheese merchandise to take home for your kids. The birthday brochure offers you a package deal; for about four dollars a head, kids get pizza, cake, free game tokens, special birthday songs, and a visit from Chuck E. Cheese. That's another facet of the Chuck E. Cheese experience. People dressed in costumes, either as Chuck E. Cheese or one of his cohorts, come around to greet the kids and hug them.

The theater seemed noisier than all the other rooms combined. A particularly harried looking mother walked by us, pulling her son after her. "I certainly hope you like all this," she said in a low voice, "because it's the last time we're ever coming here!"

And that's the essence of Chuck E. Cheese. There's so much going on in one of these places—color, noise, music, movement—that it's just too much for some people, adults in particular. But for children raised on videogames and commercials and Sesame Street and McDonald's, it's a real attention grabber. The characters created for the restaurant could have come straight out of Saturday morning cartoons. In fact, some of them look a lot like the Banana Splits. And the inside of the restaurant is incredibly diversified. On my first visit to a Chuck E. Cheese, hardly anyone was playing video games. Most of the people there were young children attending birthday parties, too young to be interested in the relatively sophisticated electronics. But the kids clustered around the people in furry costumes, and the bowling game, kiddie rides, and play areas were in constant use.

It struck me, then, that in a certain sense, the Chuck E. Cheese Pizzatime Theater is very much like the world's largest videogame. It's noisy, and it attracts your complete attention. It can give kids instant gratification, in food, games, rides, and cartoon characters. And, to make it work, you have to keep on feeding in those quarters.

Having survived my first experience at Chuck E. Cheese, I still felt I should give the concept another chance. Here we were, two adults with a combined age of sixty-three passing judgement on a restaurant designed for people under fifteen. I decided it was time for another visit, this time guided by my niece, currently aged five.

My niece is an expert on Chuck E. Cheese. She had a birthday party there herself last year, and she will talk about it in great detail, including song lyrics. Her parents, on the other hand, won't talk about the birthday party at all. At the mere mention of it, extreme weariness seems to overcome them. "Never again," they intone.

So I went to Chuck E. Cheese with an expert. And the minute we got some tokens, she disappeared.

She reappered ten or fifteen minutes later to get more tokens, then vanished again. A few minutes later, her mother and I decided to look for her. The lounge in this Chuck E. Cheese had four singing dogs called The Beagles, lip synching Beatle songs. She wasn't in the lounge.

This restaurant also had a video lounge with a five foot screen rather than a play area. She wasn't there either. Nor was she in the videogame room (it was an older restaurant than the first one I visited, with older videogames. They didn't even have a Q*Bert!) or in the theater. When asked later, she turned out not to be all that interested in the singing robots, or even in the pizza. It was nice they were there, but what she really wanted to do was ride on the flying saucer!

We found her in the kiddie ride section, riding up, down and around on a saucer shaped gadget large enough for her to sit in, powered, of course, by Chuck E. Cheese tokens. My niece had had enough of singing robots and bland food, but she could ride on that saucer forever.

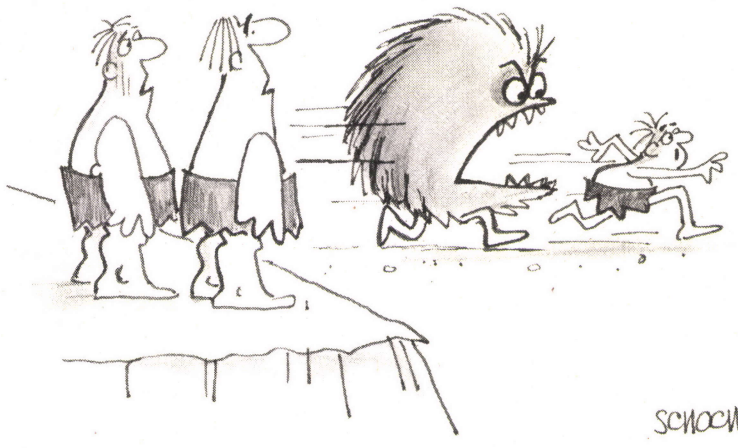
It's this diversification that keeps things interesting for the kids. And keeping things interesting is of prime importance to the people who control these concept restaurants.

"We want to keep away from concept boredom," said Don Morgan, spokesman for Chuck E. Cheese's chief competitor, Showbiz Pizza. So both Showbiz and Chuck E. Cheese are constantly looking for new twists to their concepts, to keep their customers coming back.

Showbiz Pizza has close to two hundred outlets, mostly in the midwestern states. "We're better than Chuck E. Cheese," Morgan says quite plainly, stating that a typical Chuck E. Cheese location costs three quarters of a million dollars to construct, while Showbiz pours one and a quarter million into each of theirs.

Showbiz is proud of their technology. Their robots are full figure, unlike most of those at Chuck E. Cheese, which are only

Continued on page 71



"That's the Last Pac-Man on earth. Thank goodness we've seen the last of him."

TRAGIC IMAGIC

by Leonard Herman

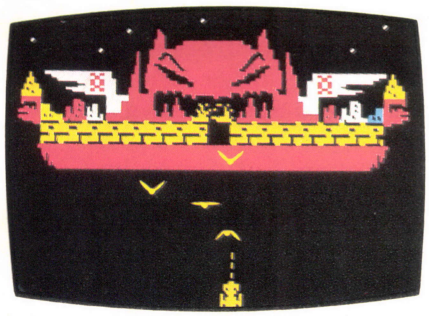
It has all the elements of a classical tragedy: a collection of good-natured, creative people of integrity rise to the heights of artistic and financial success, only to be ruined by their own tragic flaws or the machinations of fate.

Dramatic, isn't it? Not completely true, however. Imagic is not ruined, not yet.

In October, spokesman Margaret Davis announced that Imagic had been forced to lay off most of its work force. It was revealed that, henceforth, Imagic would be solely a game design house; they would discontinue production of their own games. Industry insiders feel that Imagic is very close to total extinction.

How could a company which has consistently produced games with innovative graphics and gameplay, games that were attractively packaged and well promoted--how could such a company fall so far, so fast?

Imagic's tragic flaw appears to be mismanagement, an inability or unwillingness to cope with high finance, which led to a disastrous decision late last year. Fate intervened in the forms of a sudden, industry-wide turnaround in software sales and the appearance of an outer space Grinch that stole their Christmas: E.T.



Demon Attack *for Intellivision.*

CHRISTMAS CLIMB

In 1981, there was such a shortage of new videogame cartridges for the Atari 2600 that, it seemed, any new game automatically became a bestseller. Each of these games only cost four dollars to manufacture, and they were retailing for around thirty dollars. With such huge sums to be made, dozens of companies scrambled to get their share.

By Christmastime, the shortage of 1981 was but a memory.

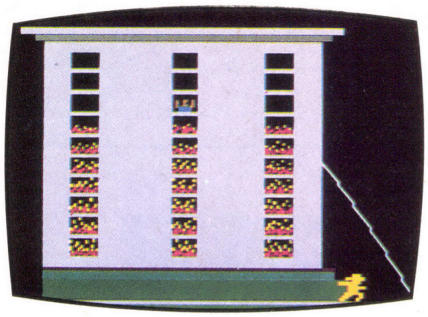
Although many of the new companies–CBS Electronics, Fox Games of the Century, Parker Brothers, Coleco--were subdivisions of larger companies with "deep pockets" (considerable financial backing), most were smaller, hastily assembled companies.

Through Christmas 1981 and the first six months of 1982, the Golden Age of the 2600 was upon us, and the times of shortage and drought were but a memory. Cartridge sales were phenomenal.

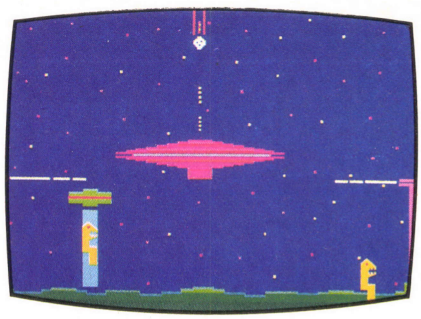
The Golden Age was not to last, however. With a glut of new cartridges, shelf space on the retail level became scarce. Many of the companies could not find distribution. Also, the introduction of Intellivision and, especially, ColecoVision and the Atari 5200 stole the glow from the humble 2600. While those companies with large financial backing had the resources to adapt, many of the smaller ones did not and faded from view.

One exception to the smaller company rule was Imagic. In March 1982, Imagic released its first three games, *Trick Shot, Star Voyager,* and *Demon Attack. Demon Attack* quickly shot to the top of the bestseller lists and stayed there. *Demon Attack* money helped Imagic adapt to the changing market... for a while.

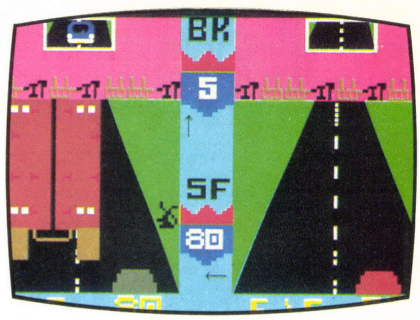
In its first year, Imagic released twenty-five cartridges in all, including adaptations of their 2600 games to Intellivision. This was far more titles than any other game company, including Atari and Activision. Imagic reportedly sold over $75 million worth of cartridges, $10 million more than that sold by Activision during the same period (Ac-



Fire Fighter



Cosmic Ark



Truckin'

tivision released seven fewer games than Imagic). Despite the superior sales, Imagic could not shake Activision from its first place slot. And this flood of activity was laying the groundwork for their demise as a game production company.

INTERMISSION

At this time it is important to note some random but relevant points of information.

Imagic was founded by four game designers. Activision was founded by four game designers and a former record company executive whose major strength was in marketing (James Levy). Since the game cartridge retail business is in many ways similar to the record retail business, Levy's expertise would eventually see Activision through the dark times to come. As will soon become apparent, Imagic's talented game designers were either unlucky or ill-equipped to deal with those same dark times. Most businessmen will tell you there's no such thing as luck.

Frank Mainero, marketing V.P. for Activision, maintains that companies who panic and stray from long-term strategic plans will be the ones that file for Chapter 11. Since its inception, Activision has taken one step at a time in its game development and marketing. The company didn't begin developing Intellivision-compatible cartridges until almost two years after the system appeared. Likewise, three years after the first Activision cartridges were released, the company is just now releasing games for computers (two of their mega-hits, *River Raid* and *Kaboom!*).

Imagic, on the other hand, seems given to impulse decisions. When the company was first founded, it was announced that Imagic would produce games for Intellivision. It was not until nearly six months later that Intellivision-compatible *Demon Attack* and *Atlantis* appeared. Likewise, in January of this year (when the writing was already on the wall), Imagic announced that they would be designing games for Odyssey, Commodore and the Atari computers in addition to the previously mentioned units. Moreover, Imagic signed an exclusive contract with Texas Instruments to develop games for their home computer, and mere weeks later, TI stock tumbled 41½ points in one point week and the company reported losses for the quarter in the millions. Bad luck for Imagic? Perhaps, but hard-noses who don't believe in luck might well term it "poor research, poor planning...panic."

Now let's examine the events surrounding Christmas 1982, a disastrous season for the software business in general, and Imagic in particular.

CHRISTMAS CRASH

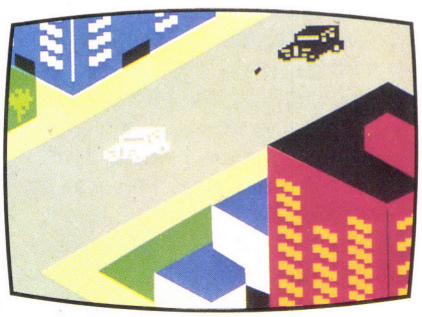
The following account has been deduced from facts and information special to VCI.

During the third and fourth quarters of 1982, the powers-that-be at Imagic decided that they wanted to make a public offering of their stock. When a public stock offering is made, a group of underwriters (brokers such as Merrill Lynch or others) will buy all of a given company's stock at a price slightly lower than it will be offered to the public. In this way, the company gets all of its money at one time and the underwriters will make their profit once they in turn sell the stock to the public.

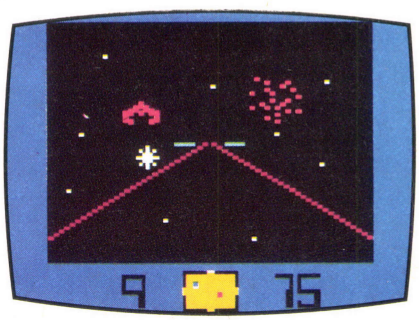
The first step in making a public offering of stock is for the company to file a registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission; this statement contains the company's prospectus. For a period of four to six weeks the SEC reviews the company's statement to be sure they have complied with all points of the law.

This period of review is a very sensitive time. If, during this time, something happens that would substantially change the information in the statement, the statement becomes invalid and amendments must be filed. The new information could be good news or bad news.

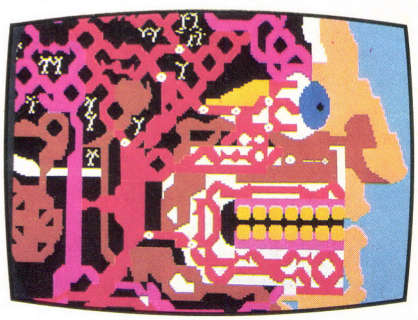
If the news is so bad that the company (and the brokers) don't feel



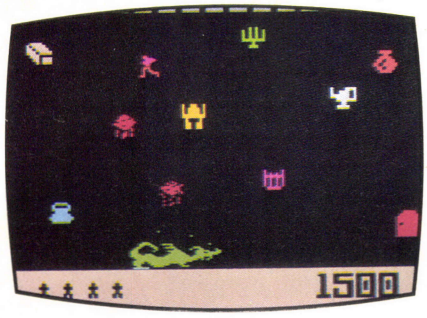
Safecracker



Star Voyager



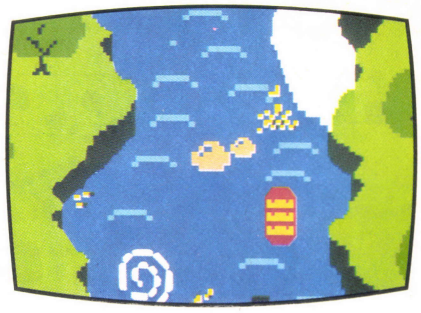
Microsurgeon



Dragonfire



Atlantis **(Intellivision)**



White Water

that the stock will sell at the price designated, then the statement may be pulled or the matter may be dropped. In any case, it is a profound embarrassment to both company and brokerage firm.

It appears that this last situation applies to Imagic.

Blame it on *E.T.* and disastrous timing on the part of Imagic.

Just prior to, or during, the period of Imagic's review, Atari's stock plummeted in the wake of an announcement of hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenues; Apollo, another game company, went under; and the situation that had been developing on the retail level blew up.

The name of the game is shelf space; that game has been played for years. The name of the game is "who will bear the risk of carrying all these dang cartridges?"; that game is relatively new. It is played like this:

You're Sven, owner of Sven's Video Madness. In May, you buy a hundred *Microsurgeons* from Imagic. They're yours now, Sven. You can't return them to Imagic. They don't sell so good. In July, you buy a hundred *Firefighters* from Imagic–all yours. No return. They don't sell so hot, either. In November, Imagic offers you three or four games. They look good, nice packages. But you just bought a million copies of *E.T.* from Atari and you don't have the space to display the Imagic cartridges. Imagic games haven't been selling that well, anyway, so you tell Imagic to take a walk. Lo and behold, Sven. *E.T.* doesn't sell either. Your stockroom is full with *Microsurgeons* and *E.T.s*...and, because you bought them all, no return (lots of money spent, none coming in), you're out of business, my man.

"If there is a lesson in the fall of Imagic, don't look for it in a comparison to Activision. The lesson, if lesson there be, is a bitter one for artists of all disciplines, one they might be wise to ignore."

After the Christmas of 1982, when *E.T.* pushed a lot of other games off the shelves (many *E.T.* games were sold, by the way, it's just that Atari pressed millions and millions of them) and it didn't sell proportionately, the Svens of the nation demanded a new inventory policy with the gamesmakers: they would make smaller and fewer purchases of the games, and the software companies would have to bear a measure of the risk.

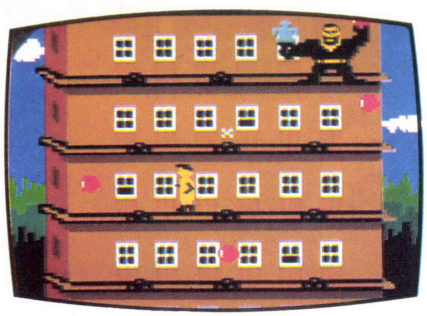
There is evidence to suggest that, during this time, Imagic agreed to buy millions of their old games back in order to obtain shelf space for their new games. Shortly following, Imagic had to sell $12 million worth of its privately held stock in order to raise the revenues to pay the storage fees on its old cartridges. And so on and so on. Bad news has its own momentum.

Imagic is not out of the picture yet. Their games will be offered on the Gameline system. Imagic continues to survive (and, we hope, thrive) as a game design firm. But many jobs--many opportunities–have been lost.

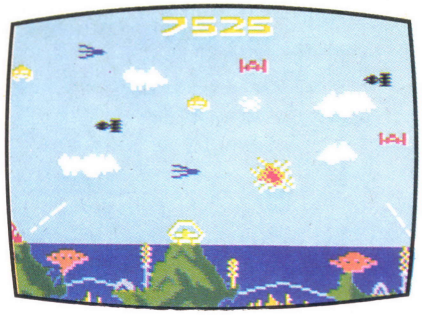
Activision has succeeded, not only because they have released hit after hit, but because they have carefully planned their every move and stuck to that plan. But if you are looking for a lesson in the fall of Imagic, a comparison with Activision is not valid. Tell an American entrepreneur that (s)he should not act out of instinct or aggressiveness and that entrepreneur will laugh in your face.

No, if lesson there be, it is a bitter one for artists of all disciplines, a lesson that true artists might be wise to ignore: in this day and age, it is not enough to be creative, to be brilliant, and to work hard. If success is the goal, if communication is the goal, the art must be sold, packaged, marketed and displayed--and a cold eye must be kept on competitors.

Otherwise, art becomes inventory.□



Beauty & The Beast



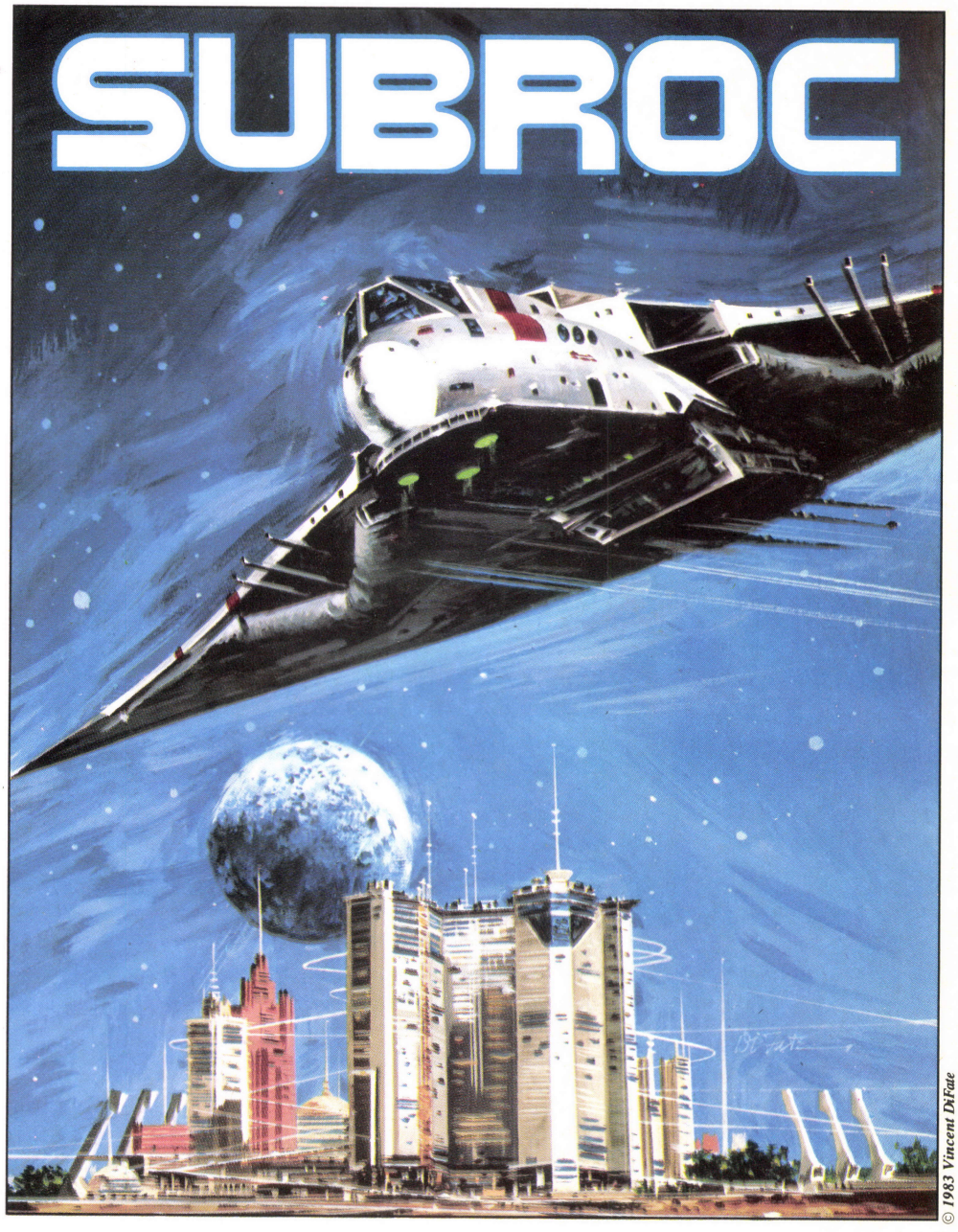
Atlantis



No Escape

conquering

SUBROC



© 1983 Vincent DiFate

By Robert J. Sodaro

OBJECT

As you insert this Coleco cartridge into your ColecoVision you are transported from the quiet of your livingroom to the far reaches of the galaxy. In this game you become a member of the famed Galactic Patrol, stationed on a remote outpost on the periphery of the Confederation system. The actual name of the planet is no longer important; it has become lost in the endless struggle for dominance. To you it is simply Waterworld, a place to be defended against alien aggressors.

Your Subroc 1 aerial/aquatic planet-skimmer is a state-of-the-art machine. Against these foes, you most assuredly will need it. For when you finaly confront the "Others" even the mighty technocracy of the vast Confederation might not be enough. Nothing is known of this other-worldy race, save that they come from beyond known space, and they seem to have a certain affinity for water worlds. Thus it was to defend these worlds that Subroc was designed and built.

Subroc was built to both fly and dive beneath the waters. In the air your forward guns are powerful plasma torpedos, while underwater they fire torpedos of a more conventional nature. Nevertheless they are just as deadly.

The reason behind the dual fly-

ing/swimming mode for Subroc, is due to the nature of the alien attackers themselves. When they set their sights on a water world, they send down a command plane that unleashes all sorts of mechanized horrors. In your defense of this unnamed backwater world you must go up against flying saucers, battleships and cruisers, as well as interceptors and drones. These fighters throw all types of hardware at you, including mines, missiles, and their own torpedos. Still, the greatest challenge is when you are forced to face off with the command ship itself.

PATTERNS

As each mission begins, you will start with a reserve of three of four crafts, depending upon which game version you are playing. Bonus ships are awarded at 20,000 points, 100,000 points, and every 100,000 points thereafter. Progressing to each successive, and more difficult wave, you will be required to fight under changing conditions. As you begin your run it is daylight. In all even numbered rounds you begin the battle during the day, but that soon changes. The sky will turn from blue to orange to black, and still the battle will rage on. The time will continue to advance until you reach the next odd numbered round, when sunlight will appear once more.

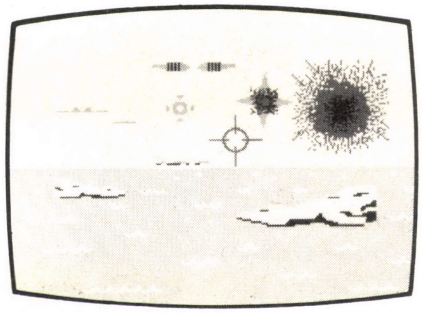
When you first start off, your Subroc is in the water, and gliding across the ocean are battleships and cruisers. In early rounds of the game they will not immediately shoot at you. However, in all other rounds they will begin to launch torpedos almost at once. Meanwhile, in the sky above you, flying saucers fill the air.

To rise from the sea and into the air, all you need do is pull back on the joystick. As you become airborn, your torpedoes automatically change type. An indicator on the top right of your screen shows you your level. During the course of each round a mystery ship will pass by on the horizon; its destruction will assure you several bonus points.

Once you have passed through the squads of ships and saucers, you will be going up against a formation of fighters. Three of them will fly at you, shooting missiles. Destroying all three garners you extra points. After you manage to defeat them the seaships will return to harass you. Accompanying them this time will be deadly interceptors. These airborn menaces swoop down out of the sky and fire at your craft. While they keep no formation, they do maintain a type of pattern.

They will start at the top of the screen, far off in the distance. Swiftly they will dive down at you, much akin to a giant bird of prey. As they dip down towards you they will almost touch the water, and then ascend once more to the heavens.

Once past these aerial entanglements, the saucers return, this time bringing the drones with them. The drones are aquatic adversaries that ply the waters firing torpedoes at you. Around this



Subroc—where the hits keep coming!

time, you will also have to deal with the menace of enemy mines, killer satellites that float through the atmosphere and explode on impact with you.

Once through all of this, you must still face the command ship. This ship is not only equipped with missiles, but also has a shield that it hovers behind. This shield will effectively hide the command ship from any direct assault. While the command plane is hiding behind its screen taking pot shots at you, its bonus point value is ever decreasing. To acquire any points at all, you must dispatch the command ship with all due speed, for if the indicator reaches zero before the ship's destruction, you will receive no points for immolating it.

Once this craft is devastated, the cycle begins anew, with the next wave of invaders.

The numbered keypad allows you to choose either a one or two player game, as well as four different difficulty levels. It will also allow you to rechoose the last game sequence played, or to set a new combination. Also handy is the ability to pause the game during the course of action.

STRATEGIES

In the lower levels you will probably want to stay in the water to rack up points by blowing away the slow moving cruisers and battleships. Also, since there is always less action going on in the water, it is wise to submerge when the air begins to fill with enemy space junk. When torpedoes are shot at you, you will be able to dodge them by shifting to one side or the other. However, the best way to avoid them is by simply raising your ship out of the water.

The flying saucers are perhaps the hardest to shoot down as they fly in a completely random manner. They always seem to hang tantalizingly, just outside of your gunsight. Still, when they are very close to you they are most vulnerable. As they recede into the distance, even though you may line up your sights on them, you will probably not score a hit. It seems there is a range limit on your air-to-air torpedoes.

In the water it is necessary to lead your targets by a fairly wide margin; in the air this is not always so. Also, in the air you can shoot as fast as you can depress the fire button; in the water only two torpedoes can be fired at any one time.

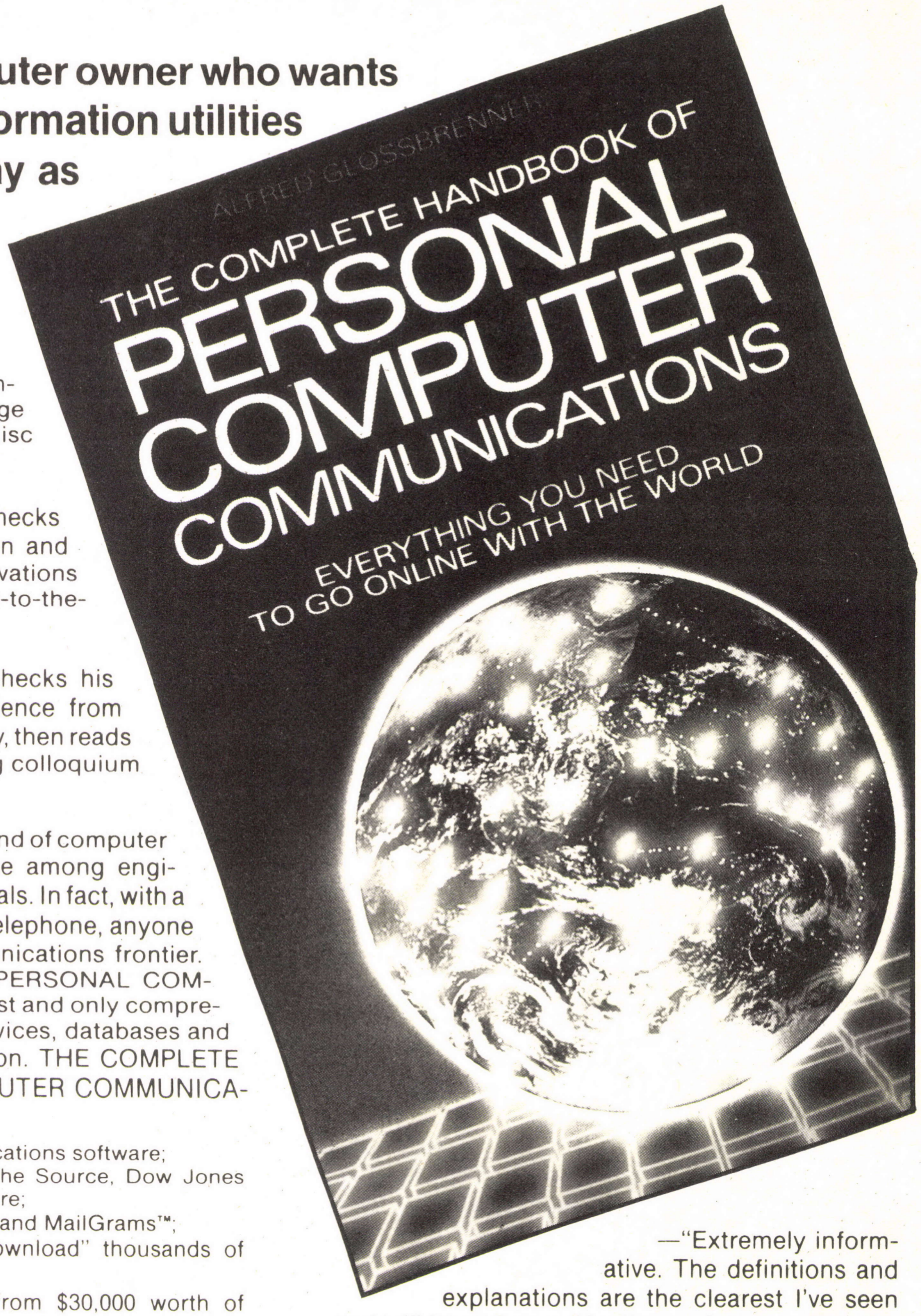
When the fighters come at you in formation they will shift position on the screen, first moving closer, then further away, all the while shifting from the top of the screen to the bottom, and left to right. The best way to eliminate these foemen is to pull your shots to one side (right or left). Then when they begin to track with you, swiftly swing back so that you will be able to catch them unawares.

While you are lining up the formation fighters you always must be mindful of the bracket of missiles that they are unleashing in your direction. An important thing to note here is that while aquatic torpedoes can be avoided by leaving the water, air missiles are still able

Continued on page 72

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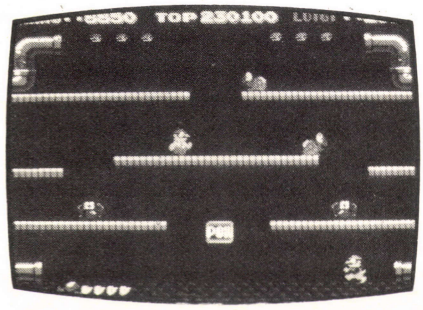
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championship videogaming



Mario Bros.

To the Editors:

Your article on *Mario Bros.* in the October issue was great, but I believe there are a few more things worth mentioning.

First, the two types of fireballs, orange and white. There is always only one orange fireball on screen at a time. It will appear at the very top and center of the screen. Hitting the floor under the fireball while it is touching the floor will wipe out the orange fireball, as you said, and it will award you a thousand points, but as soon as it reappeaars, it will move around the screen faster than before, and sometimes it is too fast to outrun from a standing start.

The white fireball will usually not appear until the sixth or seventh screen unless you spend alot of time on one screen. The white fireballs will always appear on the level you happen to be standing on, and always start at the end of the screen farthest away from you. It is very dangerous to try to jump a white fireball, as it tends to move straight for a couple of inches on the screen, then quickly rise into the air, usually hitting your player in the process. On higher screens, screen ten and above, there can be two of these onscreen at the same time. Hitting the floor while these fireballs are touching it awards two hundred points. The white fireballs never accelerate.

Also, as you said, there are three pows per pow block, but you will get a fresh new pow block after bonus screen eight, fifteen and twenty two (and even more for higher levels).

After screen eight you get slipices—triangular blocks of ice which cannot be touched. These will stop in the middle of a platform and freeze it, making it *very* slippery. They can be destroyed by hitting the floor under them. They don't flip over, they just disappear.

One good way to rack up points is to kick off overturned pests in rapid succession. Two pests, side by side and overturned, can be kicked for 800, then 1600 points. If there is a third pest nearby, keep running and kick it; it will be worth 2400 points. The next one is worth 3200, and so on. Also, there is a surprise addition to the game, beginning with screen sixteen . . . but I won't reveal it. Good luck!

Bob Cusolito
Tewksbury, MA

Joust

To the Editors:

On the beginning levels it's best to fly around to kill your foes, but on later levels, stay close to the ground. If you are playing a one player game play defensively, on a two player game you will have to go out and be aggressive. Stay away from the dragon, it's worth a lot of points to get him, but it's not worth losing your life over. Pick up the green balls, because not only are they worth points, if you don't they will reform into stronger enemies.

Ron Jeffries
Bridgeport, CT

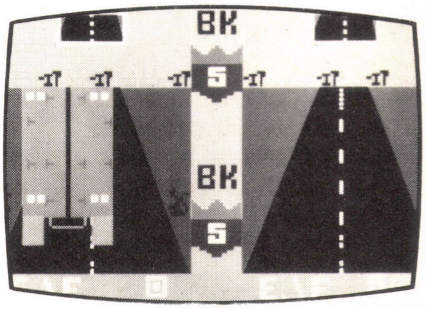
Swords & Serpents Truckin'

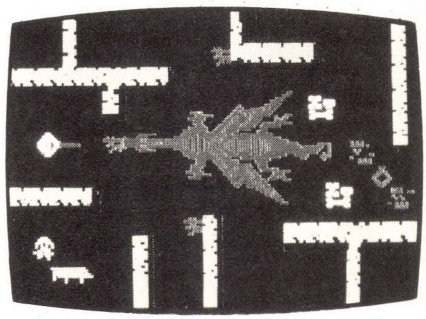
To the Editors:

I have found a way to get into the serpent's lair in *Swords & Serpents* without the aid of the wizard.

All you do is go to the lower right hand corner of the lair and position the prince so he is heading into the corner at an angle. Once the prince is positioned just so (practice will make it perfect), he will go *through* the walls of the lair, and *into* it! Note: you must keep the disc pressed in the same place until the prince is inside the lair, or he will be pushed back out.

I have also found a secret message in Imagic's *Truckin'*. To find it, drive north on 101 until you reach San Jose, California (SJ). Now SJ is not on the map, nor is Santa Cruz. When you reach SJ, turn left off of 101. You will now be driving down highway 9 heading west. Now, highway 9 is not on the map either. After this, you will arrive in an imaginary city, RL, which also happen to be the designer's initials. You will find an Imagic sign at the end of the road.





In fact, there *is* a highway 9, between San Jose and Santa Cruz, and it runs alongside Imagic's headquarters in Los Gatos. Nice job, Richard Levine!

Paul Nurimen
El Segundo, CA

Time Pilot

To the Editors:

Here are some timely tips on *Time Pilot*. On all levels, concentrate your firepower on the large aircraft (blimps, bombers) as they offer the largest amount of points. They're tough to kill, and will require several bursts. Attack them from all sides, as you loop around them. To cover the greatest amount of territory, fly on an angle (to the top left or right bottom of screen).

Tom Smith
Boston, MA.

POPULARITY POLL

This is not a best-seller list, although sales are taken into account. Rather, it is an unscientific list of the ten most popular games of October, assembled on the basis of interviews by phone and in person. VCI spoke to retailers, players buying games from those retailers, and players in arcades to get a sense of which games are being borrowed, purchased and played.

1. ***Q*Bert.*** Parker Brothers got it right this time with simultaneous releases for the 2600, ColecoVision and Intellivision . . . and a joyous game to play.

2. ***Enduro.*** 2600-only, Activision gets the checkered flag over Atari.

3. ***Ms. Pac-Man.*** The Pac phenomenon rolls and chomps on, inexplicably. 2600-only

4. ***Pole Position.*** In both a 2600 and 5200 version, this one rides the coattails of the continuing arcade smash.

5. ***BurgerTime.*** Intellivision and 2600. Fun, fun, fun. Note that the top five contain no blasting or destroying. Devouring, smashing and falling, yes, but . . .

6. ***Centipede.*** 5200 and 2600, has been a strong seller for a long time. Cannot be squashed.

7. ***Mr. Do!*** Brand new, starved ColecoVision owners pounce.

8. ***Time Pilot.*** The arcade game hangs on, and this ColecoVision offering premieres strongly.

9. ***Decathlon.*** Surprisingly favorable press reaction to this 2600 trial, look for it to cramp and die.

10. ***Jungle Hunt.*** Boulder and boulder, clings to 2600 popularity.

Bubbling near the top: ***Robot Tank, River Raid, Miner 2049er, Looping, Frogger . . .*** and Intellivision version breathes new life into ***Pitfall.***

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Roving reporter Bob Sodaro visited local arcades and elicited the following strategy tips:

Sarah Leibowitz
Samantha Farber

Star Wars

Shoot all the little things, and get the hell out of the way.

Terry O'Connor

Tutankaham

Joggle the joystick back and forth to get nasties to move into your line of fire. If using Warp Zone, make sure that the other end is clear before entering. When you are being attacked, try to keep your back protected so they don't sneak up on you.

Tina Martin

Pengo

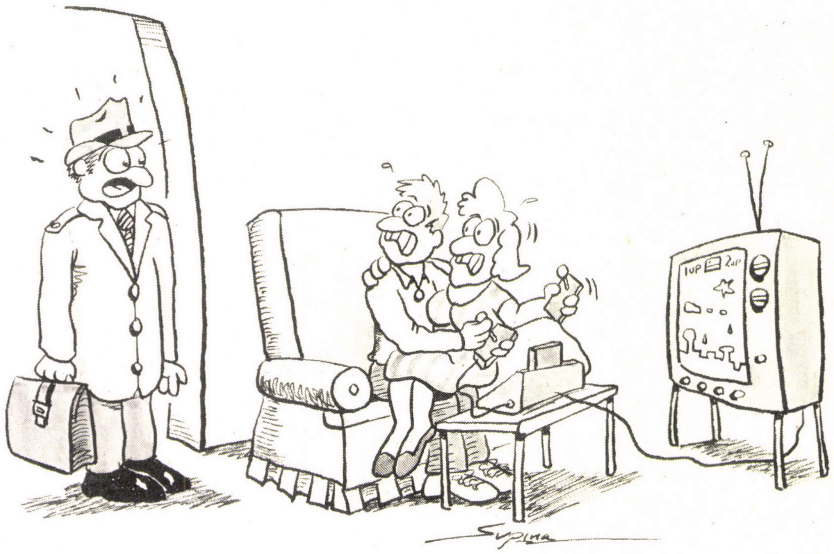
First clear all of the blocks out of the way so you can maneuver better. Try to push all of the diamond blocks together, so you can get a higher score. You can electrocute the Snobees by getting them to touch the outside wall and then kicking it, only you can get caught yourself because it is hard to get away from them at this point.

Gyruss

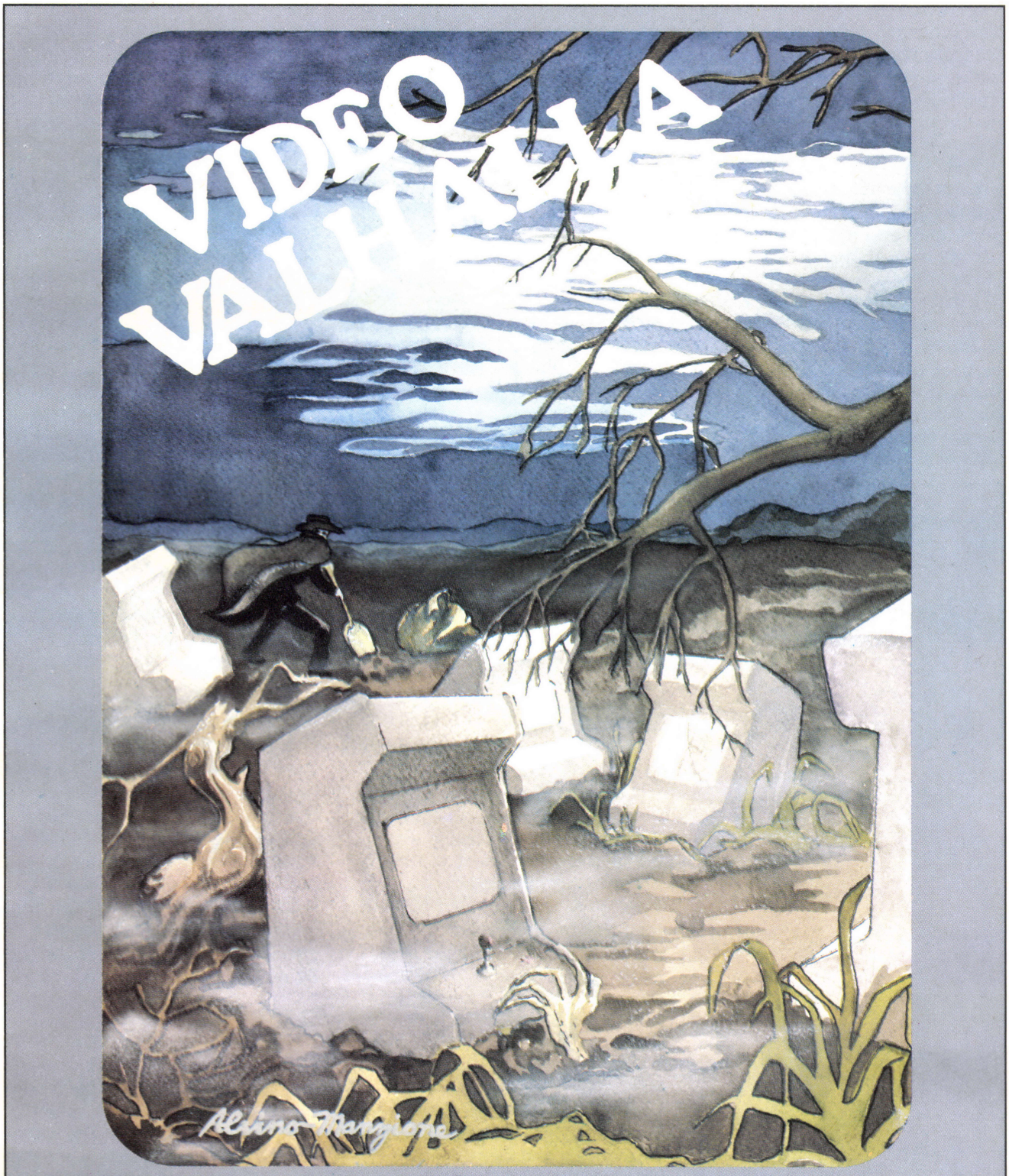
The most important thing to do is to quickly destroy the center satellite as soon as it, and its two blue companions, appear . . . this doubles your firepower and increases your survival time.

J.P. McClernan





"My wife! My best friend! My Cosmic Avenger cartridge!"



SEE! SEE!

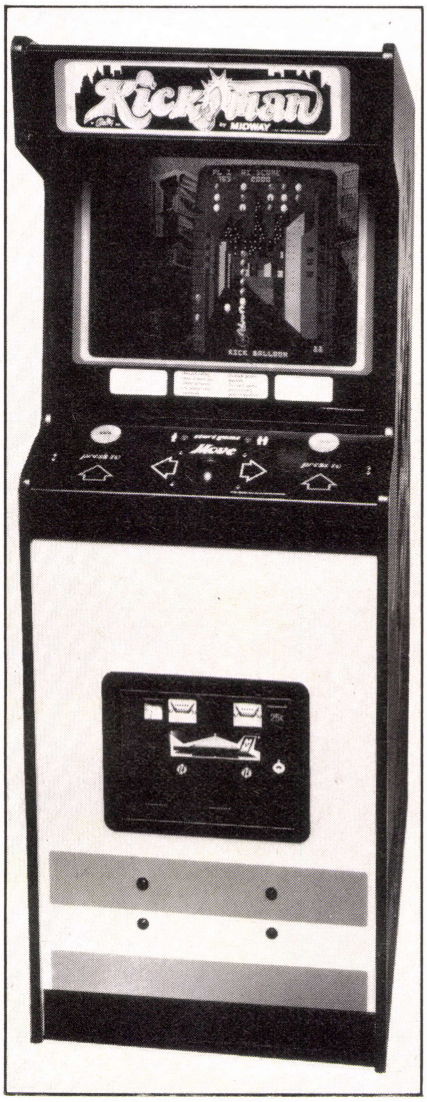
THE WORST FLOPS! THE DUMBEST GAMES! ENTIRE COMPANIES CRUMBLE AND FOLD! ARCADE MACHINES THAT WILL MAKE YOU CRINGE IN EMBARRASSMENT AND DISGUST!

By Richard Meyers

No more Mister Nice Guy. For eleven issues now, I've tried to present an intelligent, mature examination of the arcade experience—taking into consideration economic and sociological factors affecting the sort of machines we're playing. I've revealed how they're designed, enhanced, and manufactured. I've been temperate, sober, and solicitous.

Well, forget the old me. Here I present the amusement parlor pit; the worst hunks of garbage the companies ever foisted in the name of cash flow. Ah, but before the claws are fully extended, let's just say that no company goes out of its way to make a pitiful videogame. It is usually lack of experience, bad luck, or woefully wrong-headed thinking that rings the death knell for arcade machines.

That disclaimer taken care of, it's time to get our eyes dirty. In alphabetical order, the first manufacturer to come under fire must be Atari. Verily, the makers of such greats as *Star Wars* have produced some noxious specimens, all right, starting with the infamous pinball machines of 1978.



Cute clowns collect no quarters.

Just as the company was getting its wind up, they made the mistake of releasing four pinball machines that were devilishly clever, sumptuously designed, and about as dependable as a fourteen year old Pinto station wagon. No sooner did they settle into the arcade than they started breaking down.

Time 2000 was a four flipper machine with a fantasy motif, *Space Riders* was a wide body game with a "Road Warrior" look, *Middle Earth* had an upper and lower playing field each with its own pair of flippers, and *Airborne Avenger* had a superhero formula. Their *Superman* pinball game fared better, but was almost as mechanically unsound.

Atari downplays the existence of these fiascos, even though they were neat experiences for those few who were able to play them before they broke down. There is nothing quite as bad as a bad mechanical reputation in the game industry. No arcade operator will shell out five big ones for a game they can't use and can't fix.

ATARI'S ACHES

However, what Atari can't keep quiet was the resounding thud their videogames made, starting with the odious *Asteroids Deluxe* in 1981. This was a frightening circumstance, coming on the heels of their spectacularly successful *Asteroids* Regular. With the latter game, Atari had hit its stride, putting out *Missile Command* in the meantime. Suddenly the bottom fell out.

On face value, the *Deluxe* model was a valid toughening of the original. But during actual gameplay, the buttons were difficult to dance on and the recessed playscreen was confusing to watch—especially in the dark environs of a bar, restaurant, or shopping mall arcade. People started turning away in disgust from that, and all of Atari's other new releases.

First there was *Battlezone,* the cult favorite. Although fascinating from many standpoints, what wasn't fun at all was the machine's tendency to "fade out." Suddenly the green-outlined enemy targets were impossible to see, creating an invisible adversary. Coming quick on its heels was *Red Baron,* another wargame that depended upon a screen picturing green-outlined enemies—in this case, World War One-vintage aircraft.

The worst, however, was *Warlords,* a dippy divertisement that placed the player above two knights in outlined armor, one of which the player controlled. Avoiding bottomless pits, the player must have his man hack the other man before he becomes the hackee. The game was slow-moving and awkward enough without having to wrestle with the controls that often led to digitalized dismemberment.

Finally, however, Atari was saved by a few successes that rescued the company from the red. *Centipede, Tempest, Space Duel,* and *Dig Dug* put them on a winning roll until their ugly attempt to cash in on *Donkey Kong* in 1982. Yes, it's *Kangaroo.* All right, everybody who really likes that game raise their hands. I mean, really, hop up steps, ring bells, collect fruit and punch monkeys. Brilliant.

Actually, about as brilliant as *Black Widow,* the spun web game of spitting spiders, egg-laying bugs, and fly squadrons. To play it is to experience the perpetual yawns. At least it's better than Cinematronics' *Battling Bugs*—a similar videogame where a star-spurting boxing glove bops bomb-dropping insects. With games like that, it's no wonder the company was in bankruptcy just before distributing the laserdisc *Dragon's Lair* game.

BALLEY'S BOMBS

Next on the alphabetical hit list comes Bally/Midway, the company that communicated *Pac-Man* fever. But before that disease, the company was responsible for the pinball plague. There was hardly a one that could be considered poor before the advent of videogames, but the company became so desperate to compete with the burgeoning video market in 1980 that several oddities were spawned.

There was the loud, obnoxious *Groundshaker,* a machine with a

stock car motif. That was the game voted "Most Likely to Drain the Ball." Among pinball players, it is considered one of the most irritating. Between the blasting race car sound effects and the poor play angles, *Groundshaker* was no earthshaker.

The game considered to be the most disappointing was *Fireball II,* the inferior sequel to the hugely successful original *Fireball.* Thankfully, pinball makers have learned what Hollywood hasn't—the remaking of an unimprovable classic leads to failure. Recently, the companies have wisely chosen to update less than perfect oldies (but goodies).

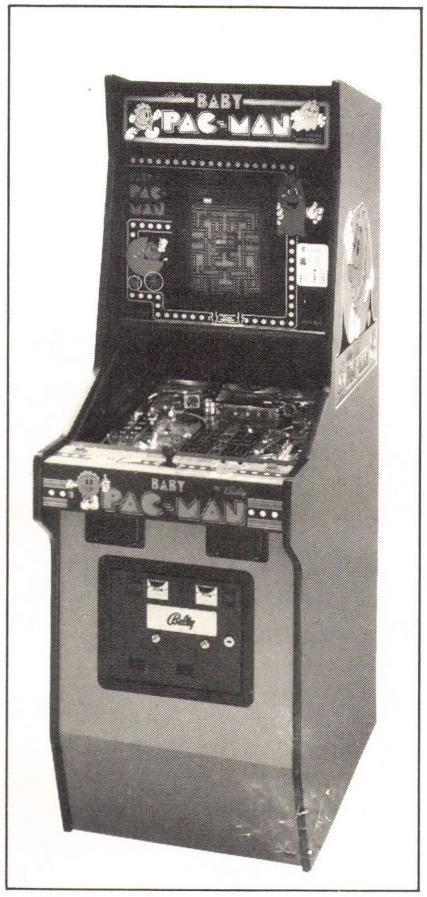
Bally/Midway has an enviable record of successes, but their flops are wondrous to behold. In retrospect, they should have known better than to go "spin-off crazy," but also in retrospect, it seems that their spin-offs were hits more than misses. One excruciating exception was *Kick-Man,* generally considered by many arcade owners as the worst Bally money maker ever.

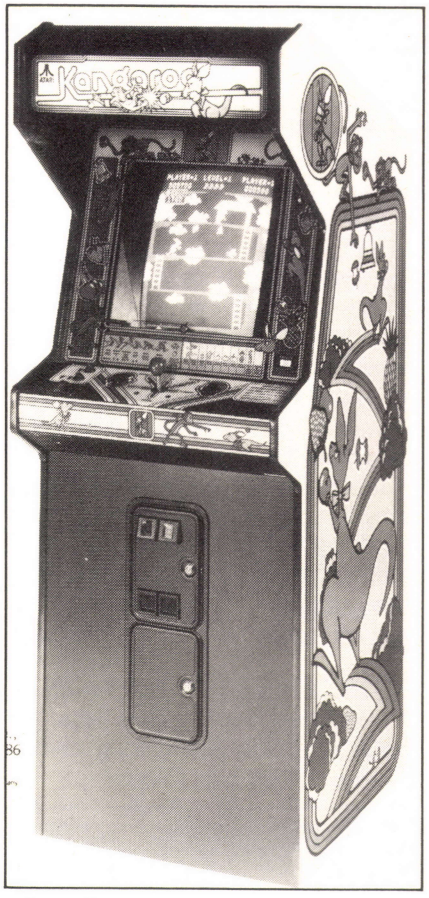
As originally conceived, *Kick-Man* was supposed to take care of the kiddies; those too young to play *Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Super Pac-Man, Pac-Man Plus, Mr. and Mrs. Pac-Man Pinball,* and *Baby Pac-Man.* But who's too young to play those things? Somehow, somebody thought that watching a tricycle-riding clown fall on his kiester every time he misses catching, kicking or popping a balloon on his hat would mean millions in the Midway mint.

No chance. *Kick-Man* fell on its tuchus in every location. The same went for *Solar Fox,* the companion videogame released the same month as the best selling *Tron.* The former game was a redundant, easy, and ultimately dull variation on all the maze games that preceeded. Watching an adolescent wrack up millions of points on his/her first try and play for a half-hour on one quarter did not warm profit-minded arcade owner's cockles.

MID-LIFE CRISES

Even so, Midway had little on D. Gottlieb and Company, a usually dependable bunch which made the bad mistake of following Bally's lead in the pinball tie-in department. Being owned by Columbia Pictures, they got the go-ahead to spin-off a lot of the corporation's television and movie products. Sadly, their gameplay vision did not match that of the original concept in several cases, most particularly that of the *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* pinball machine.





Cute idea: pinball/video comination. Cute as a baby 'roo.

Now here was a concept rife with possibilities, none of which Gottlieb seized—opting for a plain, lifeless game with the UFO motif merely painted on. The same was true of their *Charlie's Angels* game, which could have been any pinball machine for all it related to female detectives. Most great designers try to tie in the game play with the theme. Not so here. Thankfully their *Sinbad, Spider-Man, Hulk,* and *Buck Rogers* machines were better.

An unfortunate failure was the *James Bond* pinball machine, a natural concept if there ever was one. Although wide-bodied and containing a time-ball feature that kept the ball in play longer, the design was surprisingly sparse and drab, resulting in uninspiring play. And any good player knows that no matter what the theme, the game has to be good if it is to succeed.

Gottlieb was more cautious when entering the videogame market and failed to hit paydirt until 1983. Prior to that came three failures: *No Man's Land* in 1980, *New York, New York* in 1981, and *Reactor* in 1982. All were pretty poor—the latter getting a case of *Solar Fox* fever, the disease that makes gameplay all to easy once the hang of it is acquired.

Nichibutsu is next, the Japanese company with the owl logo. Although doing all right with a series of videogames with "Moon" in their names (*Moon Raker, Moon Cresta, Moon Alien,* and *Moon Shuttle),* they blew it with *Crazy Climber.* Initially appearing to be a good game, the hapless player only discovers the infuriating controls after spending his or her hard-earned coin. Simply spoken, *Crazy Climber's* controls never worked right.

It was tough enough climbing from skyscraper window to highrise window with flower pots and eggs falling, but being unable to avoid

the pitfalls because the controls would not respond was especially frustrating. Equally as frustrating was many of Sega/Gremlin's machines. It's all fine and dandy that *Zaxxon's* a winner, but how about *005* and the ever-lovely *Tranquilizer Gun?*

The former title is a spy game that is as boring as it is confusing. The latter is another Sega mystery, equal to that of *Samurai,* a nifty game that was practically yanked out of the arcades right under eager player's fingers. The *Gun* game had the player knocking out wild beasts while the Japanese Warrior game faced the player against sword carrying opponents and ninja within an oriental garden. What happened to these games? Only Sega knows for sure and so far, they're not talking.

LOW LEVEL RADIATION

Stern is less hapless than Sega, spotlighting only one misstep along their way. That was *Orbiter 1,* a promising pinball concept that players and distributors made lie. Remember, that was the game with spinning bumpers and a moon-like cratered surface instead of the customary pinball bumpers and sloped playfield. The jerking, uneven gameplay just didn't light patrons' or promoters' fires.



Sequel to a snoozer.

Up until now, the article has been picking on the big boys—the major manufacturers who have put out mostly magnificent machines. It would be hardly fair to omit the laughable hack artists who try to sneak all too transparent rip-offs into the marketplace—things like *Crazy Kong, Puck-Man* and the like. While the following few folk are not in that low, illegal league, they are in the underdog position—trying to make gravy from one or two machines.

There's Tago's *Anteater,* a quirky, ridiculous game with the title animal's tongue slopping up underground dots, ants, and worms before the spiders come out at sunset. Then there's Thomas' *Triple Punch,* with a Mario-like man making *Pepper II*-like squares across a board while avoiding fire, ghosts, and apes.

These cheap, unpromoted machines pop up from time to time, but are usually quickly squeezed out by the major's releases. Still, one or two mid-size companies manage to put out clinkers to rival those of their big brothers. Taito, for instance, makers of *Qix,* also released *Wild Western,* an old-fashioned shoot-out game with confusing controls and all too unreliable features. Universal, the distributors of *Lady Bug,* in the meantime, missed with *Snap Jack,* a vehicle riding over rough terrain game.

Its failure mirrored that of *Moon Patrol,* Williams' seemingly can't-miss machine that proved fruitless for most players. The moderate mess it made can't compare with *Hyperball,* the company's pinball mutation that wanted to start a fad, but wound up laying eggs. Basically a silver ball shooter, Bally jumped the gun by releasing *Rapid Fire* at the same time. Both died dismal deaths in the market place, as did each company's subsequent attempts at pinball evolution; *Spectrum* (Bally) and *Thunderball* (Williams).



Video/pinball marriage annulled.

Both of those replaced the launching plunger with an automatic shooter and both cleared the playfield of most traditional targets. Instead there were patterns to be hit and tunnels to be investigated. In other words, both games hoped to mesh pinball play with video thrills. Both failed.

A SUITABLE CAUSE FOR TREATMENT

There you have it, then. The critical machete is returned to its sheath and the companies can sleep securely, knowing that the Arcadia section will now return to its previous purpose of illuminating the world of the amusement center and the manufacturers who supply them.

That purpose has certainly been well served here, of course. What could be more illuminating than having your every mistake and misstep pointed out by one with all the benefits of hindsight and professional near-ignorance?

Even so, be assured that this vitriolic jaunt has been a sincere and, we hope, worthwhile endeavor in uncovering harried attempts to maintain the status quo in a business that can only prosper by invention and imagination.

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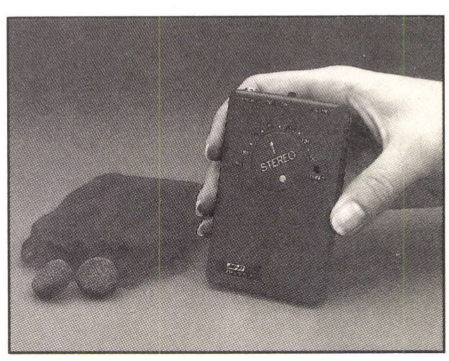
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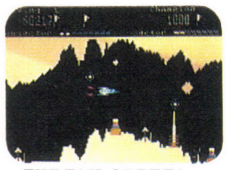
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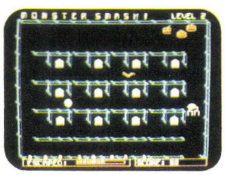
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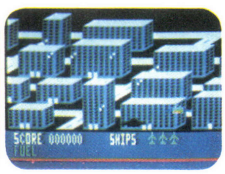
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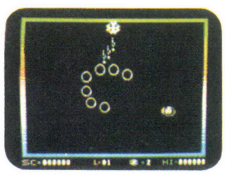
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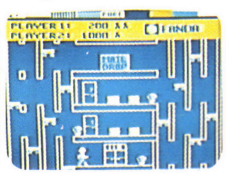
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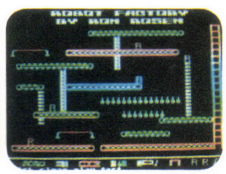
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COSMIC CHASM

Vector graphics reached new heights with the debut of Atari's *Star Wars* game this past summer. Cinematronics' *Cosmic Chasm* also employs vector graphics to good effect.

The game begins with the player entering one of seventeen rooms of a gigantic space structure. The structure itself is displayed at the top of the video screen; below that, a closeup of the room the player enters comprises the main playing field.

Inside each room, the player must eliminate enemy particles of matter while simultaneously avoiding contact with the walls of the room as well as the pulsing reactor core in the center. Contact with either means instant death.

At the player's fingertips are several action buttons, allowing for forward thrust, fire, and engagement of the ship's shield. Direction is controlled by the central *Asteroids*-like rotational knob. Since the playing field is obscured at times by the core, substantial control of the ship is mandatory. Control is similar to Gottlieb's *Reactor*.

Use thrust sparingly. Keep closer to the walls of the rooms rather than the core itself. Obliteration of the deadly cosmic particles results in the core "heating up" and growing progressively larger. The diameter of the core itself can be systematically reduced by unloading a barrage of fire from the ship. Eliminate particles as rapidly as possible, but don't neglect the



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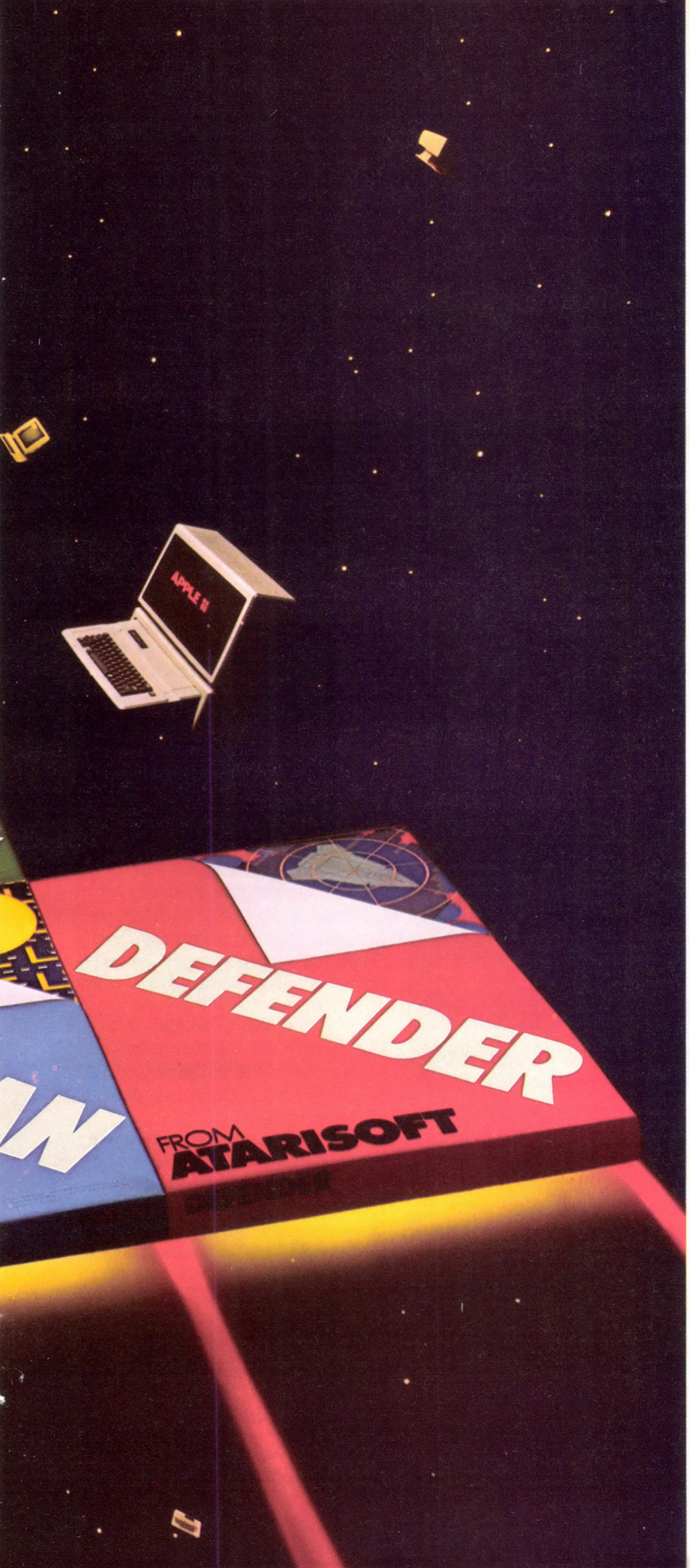
core—otherwise you'll eventually be squeezed against a wall—and out of existence. Use the core to your benefit whenever possible by "hiding" behind it; then rush out, kill the enemy, and retreat.

After one room has been cleared the player proceeds to another and begins again. Ultimately the central reactor room of the space structure—the *Cosmic Chasm* itself—must be entered and the nuclear core destroyed. Following that, the player must escape the super-structure before it blows up. Successfully doing all this can result in a hefty point bonus.

It's not necessary to destroy every room in *Cosmic Chasm* to reach the central chamber. Players can take the shortest possible route (refer to the diagram above the main playfield), enter the core, and immediately begin blasting away at the main reactor. However, clearing all the rooms first builds up the amount of points a player has (by disposing of the alien particles), and also makes for an easier escape from the central core.

One additional note: since the firing mechanism on the player's ship is located on either side (rather than the middle as in most games), taking aim at your enemies sometimes requires a second glance. You can compensate slightly for this effect by twisting the directional knob when firing, but it's best to get yourself accustomed to the way the ship operates and adjust your firing habits accordingly. □


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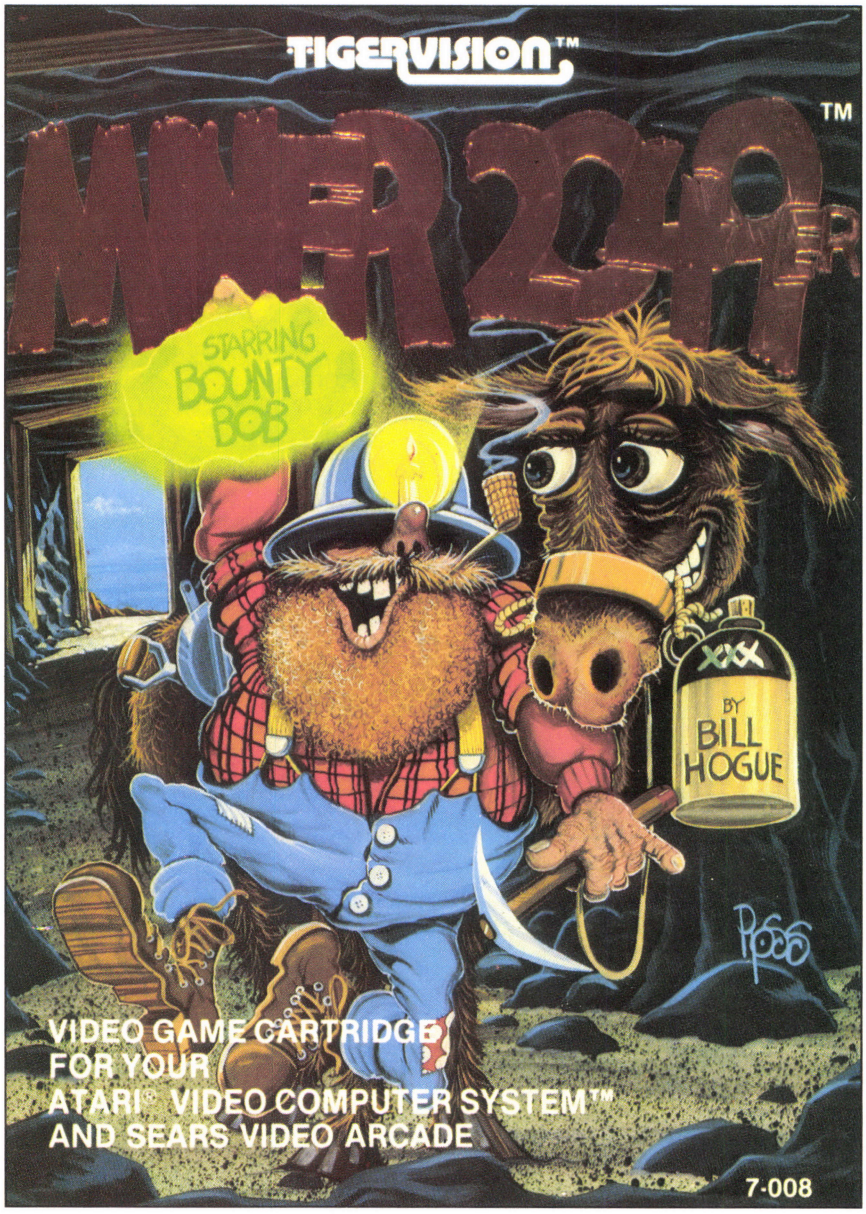
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MINER 2049ER

Although *Miner 2049er* is available for almost every major video game and computer system around, Micro Fun's ColecoVision adaptation may be the best version available. Not only do the system's large memory and joystick/keypad controllers allow for special, computer-type features like independent control of lifts and elevators, but this version also contains an "eleventh level" not found in any other. You can even pause the game at any point, to study the level you're on.

Special features aside, the best thing about this cartridge is the exciting game play. As you maneuver Bounty Bob through level after level of an abandoned uranium mine in search of the notorious Yukon Yohan, you must cover every inch of catwalk while avoiding deadly mutants, leaping across pools of radioactive waste, and mastering the use of slides, lifts, elevators, sliding platforms, and even a TNT powered cannon.

Scattered around the mine are several miner tools such as lanterns, pickaxes, and shovels. When Bounty Bob touches one of these items, the mutants are temporarily neutralized for a brief time during which Bob can eliminate them forever by simply touching them. If they are not eliminated, they return to their normal color and become lethal once again.

SCORING

As Bounty Bob walks along the framework of each level, it becomes a solid color. When a level's framework has been completely masked in this manner, you receive points for the time left on a bonus clock at the top of the screen. The timer begins at 3000 at the start of level one, and is reduced by 100 every couple of seconds. With each subsequent level, the starting time is increased by 500. If you fail to complete a screen in the time alloted, you lose a Bounty Bob.

You are also awarded five points for each small section of framework that you mask, 150 points for each miner's tool you touch, 100 points for each mutant destroyed, and 150 points for each ton of TNT taken on level ten. You start the game with three Bounty Bobs and receive extras at 10,000, 30,000, and 50,000 points.

STRATEGIES

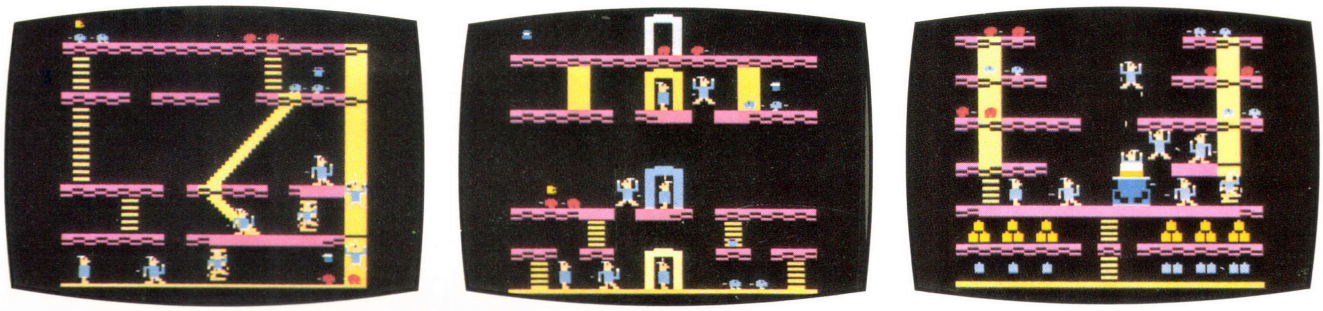
Miner 2049er is a difficult but engrossing climbing and jumping contest that requires you to learn intricate patterns in order to master each level. Simply knowing the patterns, however, will not guarantee success. Because exact timing and positioning is often crucial to the proper execution of a pattern, each one will have to be repeated several times before you will be able to confidently proceed through all eleven levels.

While the eleven patterns described below will get Bounty Bob safely through each level, they are, by no means, the only patterns that will work. In many cases, a missed lift or a safe but incorrect jump will cause you to abandon a planned pattern for some extemporaneous action. The player who can survive these pattern changes, and still complete the level with time to spare, is assured a high-scoring expedition.

LEVEL ONE

The first level begins with Bounty Bob in the bottom left corner of the

By Lloyd Davies



Bounty Bob, the 21st century's Coal Porter, contending with the slides, transporters, and cannons.

screen. Move slightly to the right, and jump straight up, thus picking up your first miner's tool. Without hesitation, move across to the right and halfway down the first ladder, to eliminate two mutants almost simultaneously. If you're fast enough, you'll be able to finish the lowest portion of framework and still have enough time to destroy the third mutant on the left of the second tier. Then, to avoid backtracking, scale the ladder nearest the location of the third mutant's demise, jump across to the small platform on the left, walk off, and head back to the ladder to reach the third tier.

You should have enough time after getting the second tool (above the small ledge), to finish the third tier, the right half of the fourth, and to destroy the final mutant at the top of the screen. Then finish the top piece of framework and the left side of the fourth tier to complete the screen.

LEVEL TWO

When the level begins, immediately ascend the ladder to Bob's left, and jump across to the platform on the left. Complete the platform and work your way to the top of the screen, filling in only those sections to the left of the ladders. When Bounty Bob reaches the top, move all the way across the top, leap-frogging the deadly mutant, and finally sliding down the long slide at the right. Because of the tool above the slide, you'll now be able to destroy the lowest mutant before you climb the ladder once again. Now, complete the framework to the right, but avoid the slide this time. Cross back over to the left and head up to the next level where, by carefully jumping your way across to the right and then back to the central slide, you can destroy the third mutant and complete the section.

Head back up the left side, stopping just below the top section to jump across to the right. The lantern Bounty Bob touches in mid-air will allow you to eliminate yet another mutant while completing this small platform. Just be sure that the top mutant isn't directly above Bob when you make the jump. Head up the ladder to finish the top section and then down the ladder on the right to complete level two.

LEVEL THREE

The addition of a working elevator makes this level one of the most enjoyable in the whole game. By pressing the numbers 1-4 on your keypad, you determine which of the four sections of framework the elevator will stop at.

When the level begins, do the small section in the lower right. Then take the elevator to four. Complete the left, and then the right side. Do the same for three. When you get to two, do the right first, then head to the left and leap up to destroy the mutant. Mask the platforms in the lower left of the screen before heading up to complete the last remaining section.

LEVEL FOUR

Because the following involves a lot of waiting for lifts, it uses almost the entire time alloted. Therefore, don't panic when you hear the warning signal.

Position your joystick to the left, so Bounty Bob will get off to a running start. Climb the ladder and mask the platform before quickly jumping onto the lift. Go all the way to the top to complete the platform on the left. Use the lift to reach the other left-side platforms, but don't jump from the very edge or Bob may overshoot the lift. After you mask the platform with the lantern, use the lift to reach the mutant at the right. Then, using the central lift, finish the platform directly above and cross over to the ledge at the top right. Avoid the mutant while you sneak down to complete the platform below, and touch the pickax. Head back up to destroy the top mutant and then use the slide to get to the lower right.

The lowest lift will take you to the shovel and then back to the mutant at the bottom right. Move across the bottom to the left and use the first lift again to reach the only remaining platform.

LEVEL FIVE

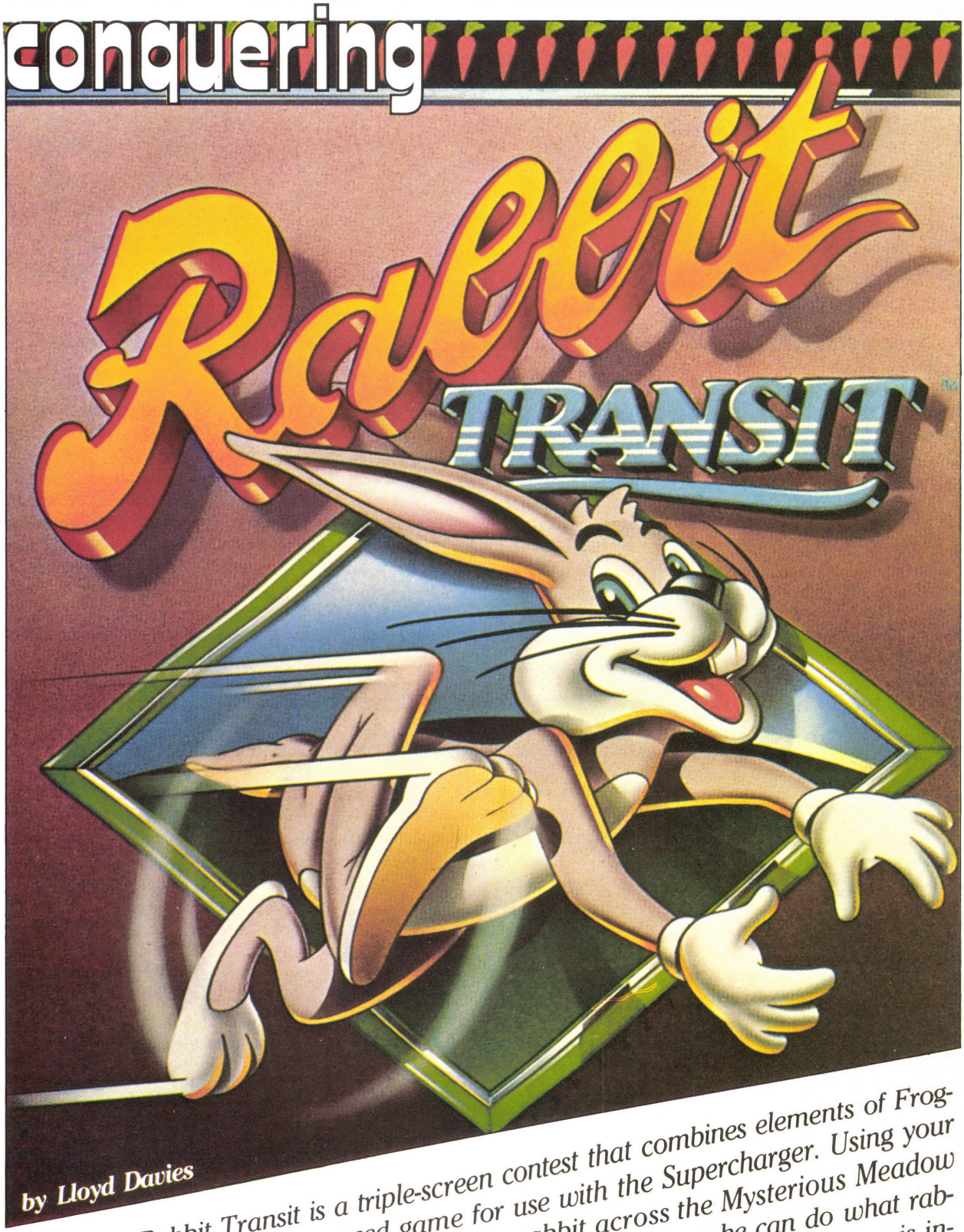
To be successful at level five, you must realize that it is possible, and, in fact, quite easy, to fill in the area above a slide, without going for a ride. If you come into it carefully, first from one side, then the other, you can mask the top and then move on to more important sections.

Now that you're beginning to get a sense of Bounty Bob's jumping ability, and the height from which he can safely walk off a ledge, begin by completing all of the platforms to the left of center-screen. Be sure to stop at the lantern ledge before jumping across to the mutant. When you reach the top of the screen, move right up to the first slide, and jump once to the right. Wait until the mutant gets close before leaping over him toward the pickax. Destroy the mutant as you complete the left side of this top section, then slide down the main slide in the center.

Use the sliding platform to cross over to the right and then work your way down to the lower sliding platform to get back to the middle. Loop around back to the right using the original

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conquering Rabbit TRANSIT™



© 1983 Starpath

by Lloyd Davies

Starpath's Rabbit Transit is a triple-screen contest that combines elements of Frogger and Q-Bert into a fast-paced game for use with the Supercharger. Using your favorite joystick, your object is to hop the rabbit across the Mysterious Meadow and through the Land of Ledges to the Bunny Bushes where he can do what rabbits do best–start a family and make it grow. Unfortunately, the meadow is inhabited by snakes, chattering choppers, and bouncing balls, all of which are deadly to your rabbit. Also fluttering about the meadow are little

butterflies which send the rabbit back to the top of the meadow to begin again.

If you make it to the bottom of the screen and the waiting turtle, your rabbit will be transported to the Land of Ledges. Here you must change the color of thirty-one ledges by hopping onto each one. To complicate matters, there is a man hurling rocks at your rabbit from the top of the screen. After the first couple of rounds, the rocks will also reverse the color of ledges you have already changed. Once all ledges have been changed to the target color (indicated in the top left corner of the screen), you proceed to the Bunny Bushes for a brief intermission before it's back to the meadow to begin again.

SCORING

The first time you cross the Mysterious Meadow, each downward hop that hasn't previously been made is worth ten points. This amount increases by one point with each subsequent round. There is also a bonus timer which begins at ninety-nine at the start of each screen. When you successfully cross the meadow, you are awarded between eleven and twenty-two points for each second left on the timer. This amount also increases in subsequent rounds.

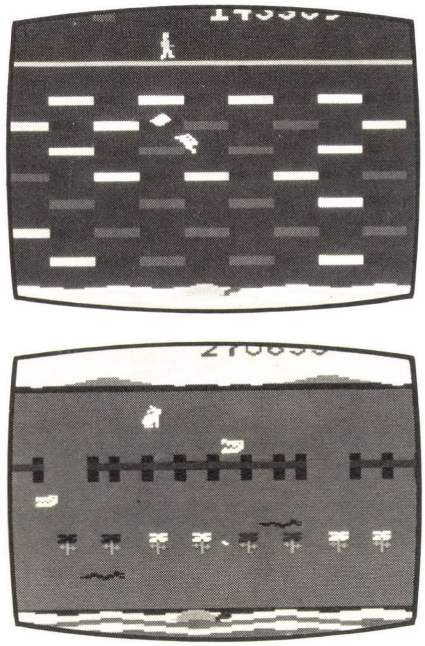
In the Land of Ledges, scoring remains constant throughout the entire game. You receive thirteen points each time you change the color of a ledge, and thirty-one points for each second left on the bonus timer at the end of the screen.

You begin the game with three bunnies, and are awarded a bonus rabbit when you reach the 10,000-point mark.

THE MYSTERIOUS MEADOW

Of the four objects you will encounter on this screen, only the bouncing balls can travel in either direction. Snakes and butterflies always move from left to right, and choppers always move from right to left. You can hop your rabbit diagonally to the left and right, both up and down the screen.

On most screens, the Mysterious Meadow also contains fences and rows of flowers. Since the rabbit



Now you can put **real** *rabbit ears on your television with* **Rabbit Transit!**

can't hop over a fence, you have to move him through an opening or gate. Each fence always has either one gate in the center, or two gates located near the sides of the screen. Flowers are harmless and can be easily hopped over, but you'll have to watch out for butterflies which always hide among them.

Although game play alternates between the meadow and ledges screens, they can be viewed as two separate games. First, the overall pattern for meadow screens is as follows:

Screens One and Two are simple, easily mastered, and different from all other meadow screens.

Screens Three through Ten are the basic screens which will repeat throughout the game in different variations. Eleven is a variation of Three, Twelve is a variation of Four, and so forth.

As the specific patterns for each of the first ten meadow screens are described, there are always exactly seven hops from the top of the screen to the waiting turtle, and since all moves are downward, they are stated simply as either left or right.

Screen One: Three hops to the left, followed immediately by four hops to the right, will land you on the turtle's back in only seven seconds. Just be sure to begin as soon as the screen appears.

Screen Two: A right, three lefts, and three rights in rapid succession will get you through both fences with no problem.

Screen Three: After two lefts into the first gate, wait for a ball to pass from left to right directly below the rabbit. Then take a right and wait for another ball to pass. From there it's four quick hops to safety.

Screen Four: This is the only screen which reappears in exactly the same form throughout the game. It consists of four snakes and a row of flowers. After three rights and a left, wait. Once the lowest snake passes, two quick lefts and a right will finish the screen.

Screen Five: Head right down the middle through all three gates and you can't miss.

Screen Six: Although it looks as if you could easily hop all the way to the turtle without pausing, it's better to play it safe. A quick right and left will get you safely by the first set of chattering choppers. As soon as the next set passes below you, head for the turtle.

Screen Seven: Two lefts will get you safely into the first gate. Then, after the snake passes, it's a right, followed by a left, followed by three more rights.

Screens Eight, Nine, and Ten: These three screens can be discussed together because the strategies for each are similar, and in all cases timing is critical. For each screen, you should begin with two fast hops to the right. Then, the instant the snake passes underneath the rabbit, you should jump left as you work your way to the bottom of the screen. This usually requires another slight pause to avoid running into a set of choppers or another snake, but once you make it past that important third jump, the path is fairly clear-cut and easy to follow.

And there it is. The next eight meadow screens will be repeats of Three through Ten, but in almost all cases, objects such as balls and choppers will come at the rabbit two at a time. The eight screens which follow these will feature triple hazards, making timing even more important. Finally, when you reach screen Twenty-seven, the patterns will change slightly, requiring minor alternations in the strategies already established.

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eye on

Continued from page 10

Chess Computer, you'll feel like an invisible opponent is seated across the table. The computer physically moves pieces around the board, sliding those it captures off to the side. An "automatic replay" feature will reenact an entire game for analysis. If you opt for the "hint" function, the computer will wiggle that piece of yours that must be used to make your best possible move. A "take back" function lets you make trial moves, and the "intriguing problem mode" makes the computer find a forced mate in a limited number of moves.

Gameplay is on twelve skill levels, from novice to expert. If the lowest is too hard or the highest too easy for you, you can make the computer play itself. Price will be under $500.

Also from Milton Bradley and less financially dear: Power Arcade, a line of peripherals compatible with the Atari 2600. The two models now being introduced, Flight Commander and Cosmic Commander, supposedly provide "unparalleled hands-on control and super-sensitive joystick response."

While both consoles can be used with a wide variety of 2600 games, each is to be sold with an accompanying cartridge, for the price of the cartridge alone. (Whether or not that price will be a premium one remains to be seen.)

Flight Commander simulates a fighter plane cockpit, featuring a machine gun with barrel gunsight, firing button, and two-handed operation. Flashing control panels and vibrational feedback add to the effect. Accompanying cartridge is *Spitfire Attack,* a six-level dogfight/flak/anti-aircraft game.

Cosmic Commander resembles the console of a spacecraft (or so Milton Bradley tells us—how would we know?), also with flashing gauges and vibrational feedback. It comes with the five-level *Survival Run,* which leads players through a maze of tunnels to destroy an alien outpost.

LAP DOGS II

We would like to dispel the rather cavalier and dismissive impression we may have communicated in our October issue in regards to joystick anchor devices. Some of these devices are quite useful to the player who is tired of his or her 2600 joystick, wants to upgrade, but is either bewildered by, or can't afford, a new deluxe joystick.

CBS Electronics' *Stick Station,* for example, instantly turns the 2600 joystick into a deluxe stick with a solid base and a sturdy knob that fits over the top of the stick. Our scores climbed.

The knob makes all the difference; others, such as the Lap Board or the Stick Station (awfully large and ungainly) would greatly benefit from a similar addition.

DUES IN QUARTERS PLEASE

We've received word of two organizations addressing themselves to the interests of videogamers.

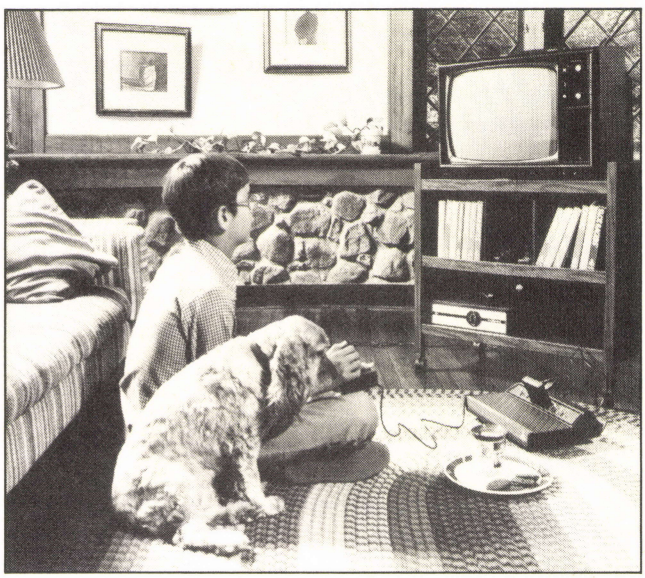
VIDION, a three thousand member group billing itself as the "international association of video game players," offers a bimonthly newsletter, decal, and a variety of discounts for a $10 annual fee. A game exchange service is available for $3 per cartridge. Call (202) 328-9346 or write David Rice at 1440 N Street, N.W. Suite 601, Washington, D.C. 20005.

The Niagara Regional B.U.G. (Bally-users group) publishes a newsletter providing information on Astrocade and its supporting companies. Call (416) 688-4595 or write them at 6 Wooddale Drive, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2T 1Y8.

COMPUTER CHIPPENDALES

When you finally give up trying to jam your videogame/computer equipment onto/into your





Top, Gusdorf's Compu-table computer work center. Above, the Videogame Cart . . . meaning mobile.

present television/stereo stand/desk/shelf, you may want to invest in furniture specially designed for your needs. The Gusdorf Company of St. Louis has just released such a line, ranging in price from $50 to $350. We can't say how their line compares to others on the market—furniture is, after all, expensive to ship for review purposes—but it is appropriate, and available.



A real show-stopper

HOLD THAT GORILLA

New for ColecoVision: *Add-a-Halt* from Video Additions. It allows you to stop a game in the middle of play to answer the phone. Or rest your thumb. Or take out a ruler and measure the angle of incidence between your jet and the Zaxxonian fighter hovering above . . .

The toggle-switch controlled unit plugs into the Expansion Interface slot on the front of the ColecoVision module. Retail price is expected to be in the $19-$21 range, which could very well give some buyers pause.

ELECT TRON

Remember many issues back when we had the great who-wrote-the-*Tron*-sequel-and-passed-it-off-as-authentic mystery?

In case the matter has slipped your mind, this office received a manuscript, purportedly from Steven Lisberger, the director of the videogamesfilm *Tron.* The story was a sequel to that underrated gem.

Lisberger told us he didn't write it, but now we know who did. It was literate Laura Ruskin of Whittier, CA. We know because she has come out of the cabinet and admitted that, as head of the fanclub Tron Fandom Forever, she wants to do everything possible to perpetuate our favorite video hero. "I want people who like *Tron* not to feel like they're alone," she recently told us.

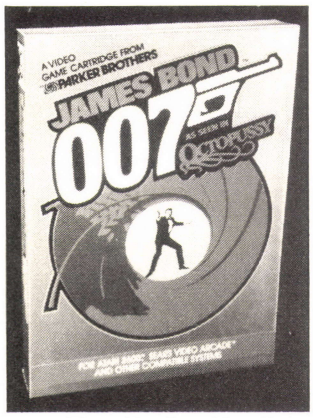
For those interested in *Tron,* there is also another fan club, this one *Friends of Tron.* The difference, says Sheryl Adsit of the latter, is that her group "consists of fans of the film, not the *Tron* philosophy." That philosophy, says Ruskin, is the theme frequently found in myth and legend that humans can bring new life to humankind by their actions against a god or authority figure.

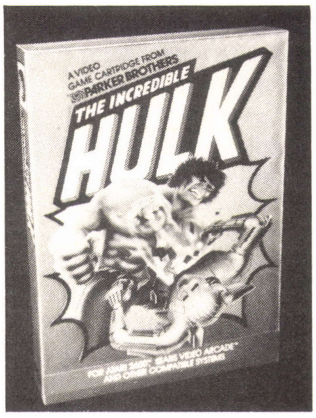
Indeed, Ms. Adsit identifies so strongly with the film that she refuses to play videogames. "I hate getting derezzed," she utters the *Tron* catchword. "I take it too personally."

Information about both clubs can be had by writing to either lady c/o Box 1374, Hawthorne, CA 90250—incidentally, the hometown of Mattel Electronics.

SHORT TAKES

• Judging from the mail we've been receiving since we opened shop last year, the most eagerly awaited game ever is Parker Brothers' *Incredible Hulk* for the 2600 and ColecoVision. Forget it, gang. Parker Brothers just announced that they are cancelling the game, along with the James Bond train-hopping *007* game.





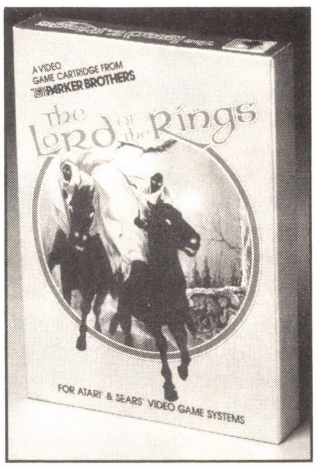
Two Parker Brothers games you'll never see.

We long ago gave up on that company's projected *Lord of the Rings* game.

• A recent installment of Ripley's Believe It Or Not made mention of a phototypesetting machine used in the orient. The United Daily News of Taipei, Taiwan has a keyboard that contains 10,000 characters and a capacity of 19,200 characters. Now those Occidentals who are having trouble learning to type can *really* feel stupid.

• On October 17th, the *New York Times* carried a story on their front page which proclaimed that the videogames industry is all but dead. The eulogy is obviously premature. There are far too many hardware units out there, and players actively using them, for committed companies to abandon them altogether.

But why go into all the pros and cons now? We'll deal with the matter at length in the next issue.



Will Parker Brothers continue its game-cancelling hobbits with this one?

• Videogame companies will do just about anything to promote their games. Fox Games sent editors ketchup and so on to promote *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes.* CBS Electronics sent us a pouch full of bogus diamonds to call attention to the release of *Mountain King.*

But recently, Activision went too far: their PR Firm (which is full of madwomen anyway) sent a Mad Bomber to the quivering and quaking VCI offices to promote the computer adaptation of *Kaboom!* No damage.

THE SERPENT

As our cover story this issue indicates, Coleco faces considerable marketing and technical difficulties with their Adam computer. Now, with the mid-October date for shipment of the first units approaching, the picture for Coleco has darkened even further.

In the second week of October, Coleco was hit by three lawsuits, filed in Federal District Court in Hartford, Connecticut, by Coleco stockholders. The complainants were seeking class action status on behalf of investors who purchased Coleco stock from late May to late September.

The suits charged that several Coleco officers, including president and chief executive officer Arnold Greenberg, sold $8 million of their Coleco stock in June, violating SEC rules by concealing unfavorable information about the computer while selling their stock at its peak.

In June, Coleco stock was selling for $65 per share. As of early October, it was selling at less than half that amount.

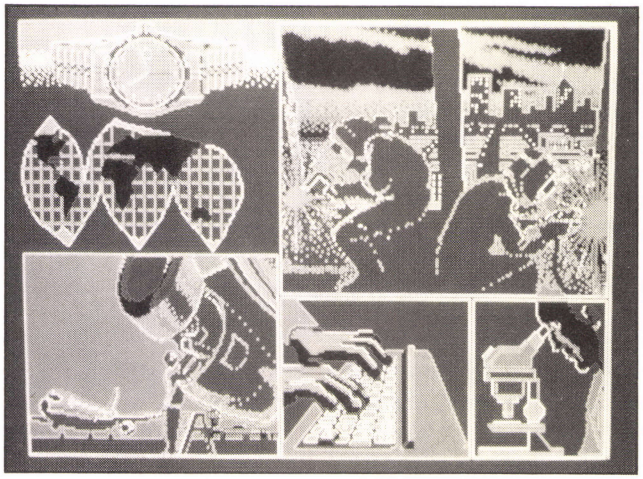
Counsel for Coleco denied any wrongdoing, adding that all stock sales were reviewed by an outside law firm and were found to comply with SEC guidelines.

SHOOT AND SLIDE

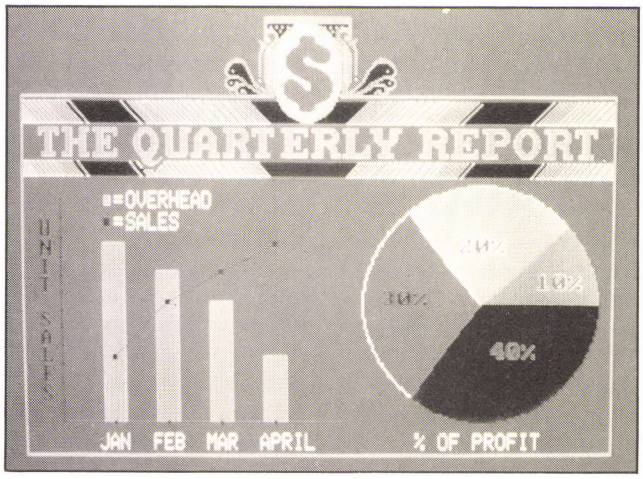
This item, and the one following it, may be beyond the reach, financially, of most individual consumers now, but they point the way to products that wil be generally available in the next few years.

For the executive in a hurry (any other kind generally doesn't last) a new graphics program will make it possible to create complete, integrated and impressive visual presentations in a matter of hours.

Created by Hoo-min D. Toong of VCN (Visual Communications Network, a division of Prentice Hall) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, VCN Execuvision is **IBM-PC** compatible. The menu-driven program comes complete with a full color "idiot proof" users manual; a demonstration disk; a library of hundreds of pre-rendered images from which to select; pie, bar and line graphics with a special automatic PLOT function; limited animation and motion techniques; sixty four color schemes and ten type styles; automatic run-time options; and complete sketch capabilities so that the user can create his or her own images.







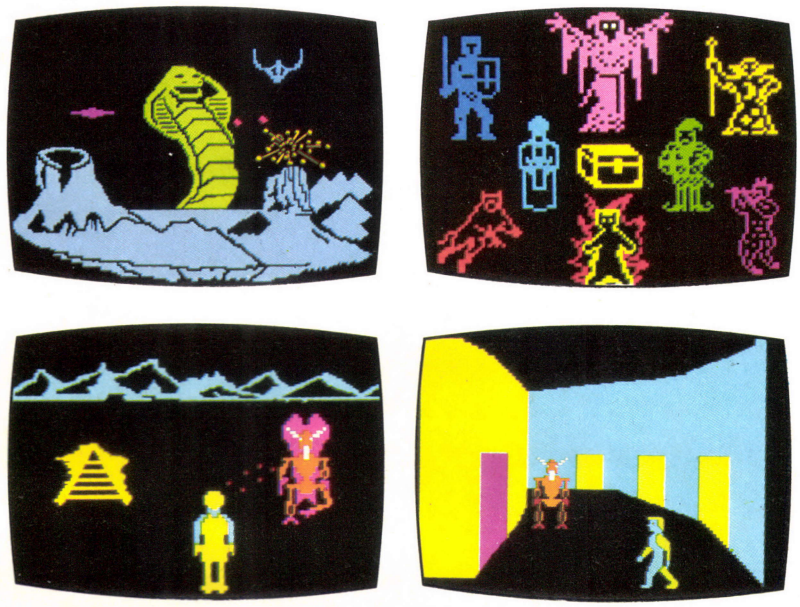
The images included on the VCN Execuvision disk can be trimmed, color coordinated and combined with charts and type as the user sees fit.



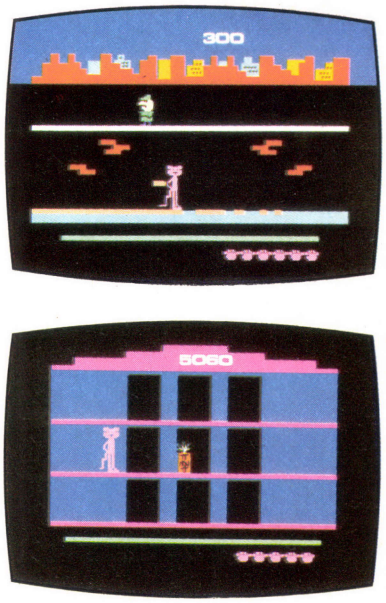
All of the images on the included image menu and presentation disks can be trimmed, color-adapted and collaged as the user sees fit. Hard-copy slides can be created from the program with a camera (not included) that will lift images off the PC monitor, or a presentation paper can be printed out simultaneously. Little or no typing is required to create a presentation; the program is cursor-controlled.

The program is divided into five functions, taking the user step-by-step through the processes of creating the images, putting the slides into the proper order, printing out slides or printer copy, running the show (on slides or

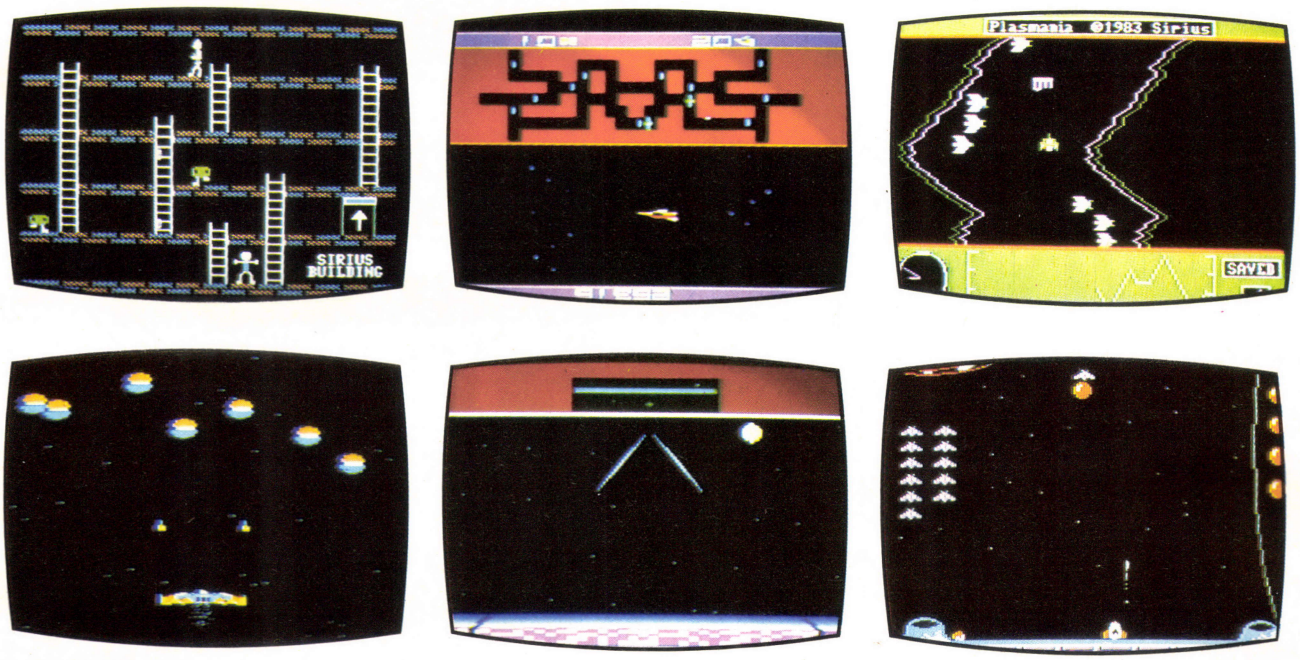
Continued on page 75



If looks could kill! At top left is the laser-eyed serpent Adam Power must battle in Power Lords, *from NAP for Odyssey², Atari 2600, and ColecoVision. Other screens depict some of the 80 magic items, 140 monsters and 2500 rooms you can encounter in* Lord of the Dungeon , *an NAP role-playing game for Coleco Vision. A round can last for weeks or even months.*



Pursuit of the Pink Panther *from NAP's Probe 2000 pits Inspector Clouseau against the famed feline. The action occurs on four screens, each one with its own challenges.*

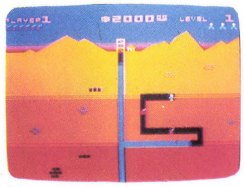


Offerings from Sirius for various computers (clockwise from top left): Beer Run *(lots of excitement on tap);* Spider City *(rescue stranded spacemen from the city's dark tunnels);* Plasmania *(battle your way past microscopic nasties to reach the blood clot near your patient's brain);* Space Eggs *(scramble them before they scramble you);* Final Orbit *(3D space battle, plus bonus pinball game); and* Bandits *(guard lunar base from thieves).*

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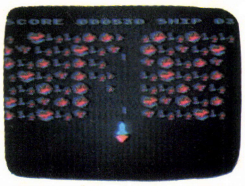


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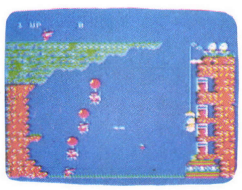
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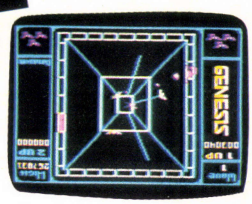
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EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE:
Problem Solving/Logic/Thinking Skills

List compiled and reviewed by Susan Levitan

Children learn about their surroundings and environment by observing, playing, exploring, experimenting with information and ideas, testing and challenging situations, and trial and error. Children use imagination, creativity, questioning, reflection, and reasoning as part of the process of learning about how the world works. Problem solving skills develop as children grow older, face various problems and situations, and learn from them. Skills in problem solving may include analyzing a situation, selecting relevant information, formulating a plan, testing a hypothesis, and generalizing from the results obtained. Computer software can be used to introduce problems and situations, accept/modify/challenge children's responses, and present solutions. Children may draw inferences, make judgements, and reach conclusions by logical reasoning. Using educational games, children will learn about perception, discrimination, relationships, categories, classification, and logic. The ultimate goal is for children to apply the various skills and techniques to more complex problems and situations.

GERTRUDE'S SECRETS
The Learning Company
Apple II and IIe
ages 4-9.

A series of color and shape games help children develop logical thinking skills. At the beginning of each game, Gertrude the Goose flies off the screen and fetches a collection of colored shapes. You solve the game puzzles by arranging game pieces according to given rules or by guessing a secret rule. A special room even allows you to create your own shapes.

GERTRUDE'S PUZZLES
The Learning Company
Apple II and IIe
ages 6 and up.

Develop reasoning skills as you move puzzle pieces to form various shapes and color patterns according to given rules. You can also design your own set of pieces of puzzles to create any level of difficulty.

ROCKY'S BOOTS
The Learning Company;
Apple II and IIe
ages 7 and up.

Use Rocky the Raccoon to build animated logic machines and learn the basics of computer circuits. Colors, sounds, and music are incorporated to teach logical thinking skills. A very challenging, complex game recommended for ages seven "and up."

SNOOPER TROOPS I
Spinnaker Software Corp.
Apple, IBM, Atari, Commodore 64
ages 10-adult.

Case #1 The Granite Point Ghost is a challenging detective game where the player must take notes, draw maps, classify and organize information, and develop reasoning and problem solving skills, Who (or what) is haunting the old Cable Mansion in Granite Point?

SNOOPER TROOPS II
Spinnaker Software Corp.
Apple, IBM, Atari, Commodore 64
ages 10-adult.

Case #2 The Disappearing Dolphin places you in the role of a private detective. Who stole Lily The Dolphin from the Tabasco Aquarium and why? You will have to identify the perpetrator from a list of eight suspects. A SnoopMobile, a wrist radio, a SnoopNet computer, a camera, and even a notebook will aid you in this educational adventure game.

IN SEARCH OF THE MOST AMAZING THING
Spinnaker Software Corp.; Apple, IBM, Atari, Commodore 64
ages 10-adult.

TEASERS BY TOBBS: PUZZLES AND PROBLEM SOLVING
Sunburst Communications; Apple, Atari, TRS-80
grades 4 and up.

Two programs designed to help children think logically in solving addition and multiplication problems. Both programs present a grid and a character named Tobbs. The grid has a succession of math problems, each with a missing number. The player uses logic to decide which number cannot be, might be, or must be the number that solves the problem on the grid. Six levels of difficulty are offered for both *Puzzles* and *Problem Solving*.

MOPTOWN

Apple Computer Inc.; Apple preschool to adult.

Players are challenged to use visual discrimination and problem solving skills. Moptown creatures are identified by four characteristics (tall/short, fat/thin, red/blue, gribbit/bibbit) in a series of logic puzzle games that become progressively more difficult and complex as each new level is reached.

SPOTLIGHT

Apple Computer, Inc.; Apple ages 9-13.

Discovery games emphasizing thinking skills from Children's Television Workshop, creators of *Sesame Street.* How light is reflected, how to guess three digit numbers using clues and more in this exciting program.

ODD ONE OUT

Sunburst Communications; Apple grades 2-6.

Good graphics programs help children to identify various relationships—colors, shapes, pictures. Four pictures, letters, or words are presented on the screen and you are asked to identify which is the "odd one out." There are varying levels of difficulty, providing increasingly challenging categorization problems.

INTERNA-MAZE

Softside; Apple elementary and intermediate grades.

Here's your chance to see a maze from the inside. The walls appear as they would to a rat trying to run the maze. Try to find your way to the end!

THE JAR GAME

Milliken; Apple II+, Atari grades K-4.

A learning game emphasizing readiness for probability. Identify various sizes and quantities. Will you pick the right jar?

CHAOS

Milliken; Apple II+, Atari grades 1-3.

Classification and direction (left, right, up, down) are highlighted in this game. Capture the magic figures with your space ship. Try not to crash!

THE POND: EXPLORATIONS IN PROBLEM SOLVING

Sunburst Communications; Atari grades 3-adult.

To be successful in this game, you must be able to think through a situation logically. In order to help a frog find its way through a pond, you must gather information about a path of lily pads and generalize the information into a pattern. An option forces the frog to leap a given number of steps.

THINKING SKILLS

Sunburst Communications; TRS-80 Models I and III grades 4 and up.

Three programs will help sharpen logic and thinking skills. In *Gemini,* you must figure out how an extraterrestrial farmer sorts his flock. *Sort-A-Set* challenges you to form a logical sorting scheme that gives you more objects than are in other bins. The third program, *Code Quest,* requires you to use logic to discover a secret combination of letters and numbers.

LOGIC AND DEDUCTION

Scholastic Inc.; TRS-80 Models I and III grades 4-12.

This challenging game is a modified version of *Master Mind.* Guess a numerical code sequence hidden in the computer by using deductive reasoning and the process of elimination. There are different levels of difficulty. You are allowed up to ten turns to break the code sequence at each level. After each try the computer provides clues. Good luck!

AMAZING

Chromosette; TRS-80 Color Computer elementary and intermediate grades.

A maze is briefly displayed on the screen. Then the player enters the maze, seeing the walls from a rat's viewpoint. The goal is to escape from the maze without needing to return to the original display for help.

BAGELS SUPREME

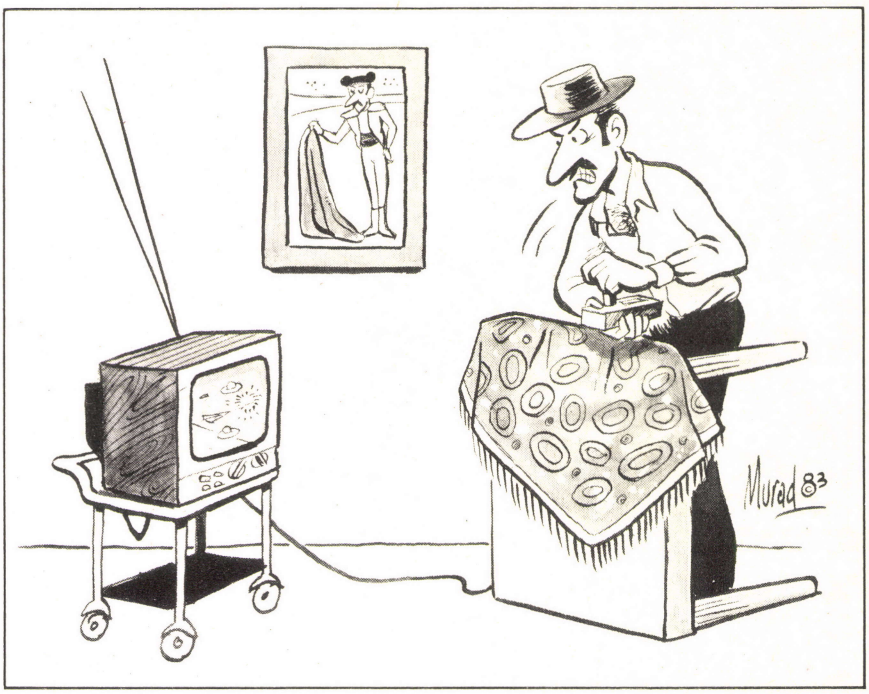
JMH Software; PET grades 3-10.

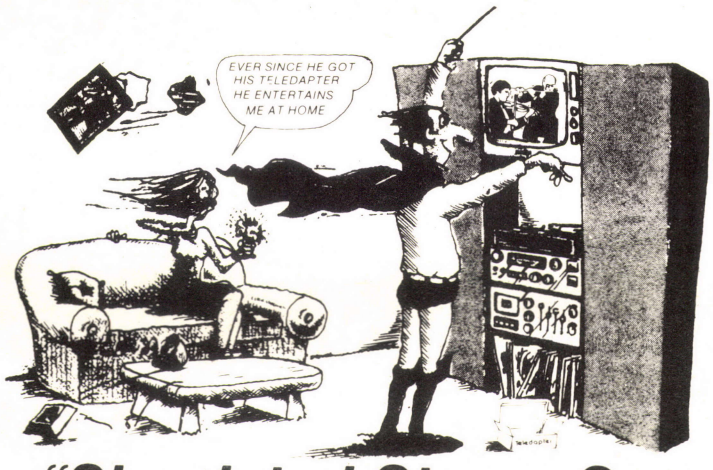
Similar to *Master Mind,* here is a number guessing game with three digit numbers; for one or two players. Help is available describing the symbols by pressing H. Clues are given after each guess.

RATRUN

Cursor #13 August/September 1979; PET elementary and intermediate grades.

See and run a maze from the perspective of a rat. Turn and run in different directions in order to reach the reward at the end! Test your logic skills!





2 WAYS*

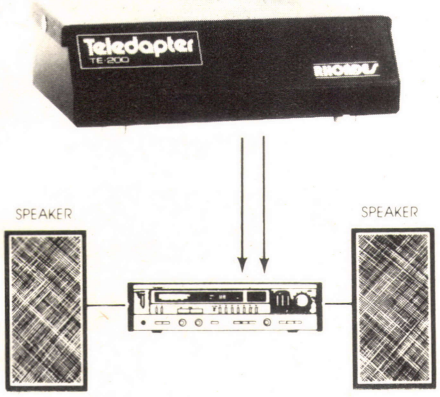
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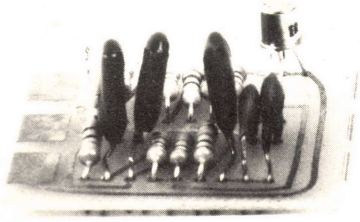
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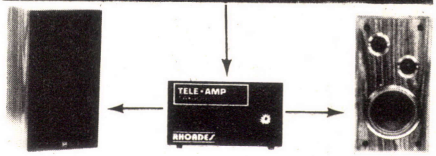
is to use your present stereo or receiver system connected to your TV via our TV to Stereo Adapter.





*WAY NO. 2

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Works on all TV's, every TV program, even video tape's, and pay TV channels. Since it works with your TV, all channel switching and volume changes are made automatically when you use your remote control or regular TV controls.

This is all done with quality electronics combined and engineered into the unique circuit board.

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The Teledapter will work with any TV and any stereo system that has auxillary, tuner, or tape inputs. The Teledapter itself should be located near your stereo. A cable supplied with the unit plugs into the input of the Teledapter and goes to the TV or VCR where it is plugged into an earphone jack, an audio output, or can be alligator clipped directly on the TV's speaker terminals. The outputs of the Teledapter (left and right) plug directly into your stereo amp or receiver, with cables also supplied.

If you have a stereo, then the Teledapter is all you need. Order model TE•200 $39.95 plus 3.00 shipping.

THE SOUND

Words are hard pressed to describe the sound of a car on TV squealing around a corner, appearing to move from one side of the living room to the other. Or the crowd at a ball game, the crack of the bat, the whistles, as though you were on the playing field. And musicals, the pounding of the drums, the tingling of the cymbals, all coming from different locations.

WORTHY COMMENTS

TV GUIDE . . . "The Rhoades TELEDAPTER is a steal at $39.95 . . . the results are excellent"

HOME VIDEO MAGAZINE . . . "you immediately get a sense of spaciousness—just what stereo's all about. It works!". . . "If we had to pick a single winner, we'd have to choose the TELEDAPTER. It's inexpensive, its flexible and it works."

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The Tele•Amp has all the same circuity as the Teledapter plus a stereo power amplifier built right into one neat little package. (size 2¼"H x 3½"W x 6"D) It connects to your TV or VCR just like the Teledapter, and then to any pair of speakers you might have or our recommended speakers below. Completely eliminates the need for a separate stereo system. Order model TA•400 $99.95 plus $5.00 shipping.

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Speakers measure 20"H x 9"D x 11"W rated at 20 watts each, two way system, 8" woofers, super tweeter, beautiful simulated walnut cabinets. There are less expensive speakers, but none that perform and look like these at this price. Order Model TB•6000 pair $119.00 plus $5.00 shipping.

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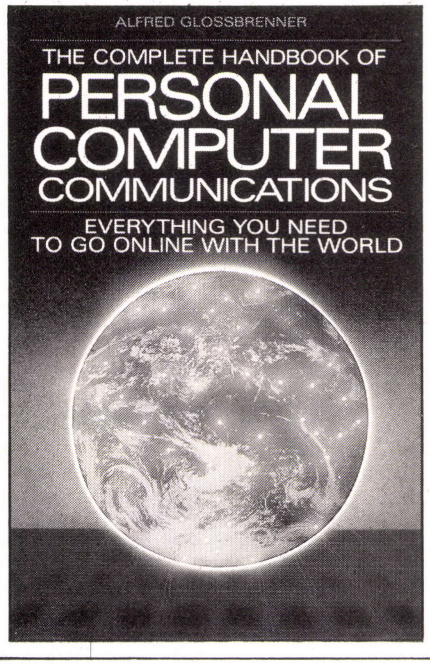
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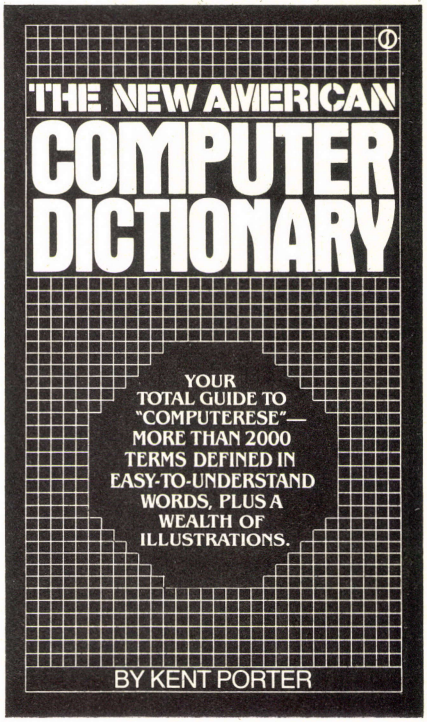
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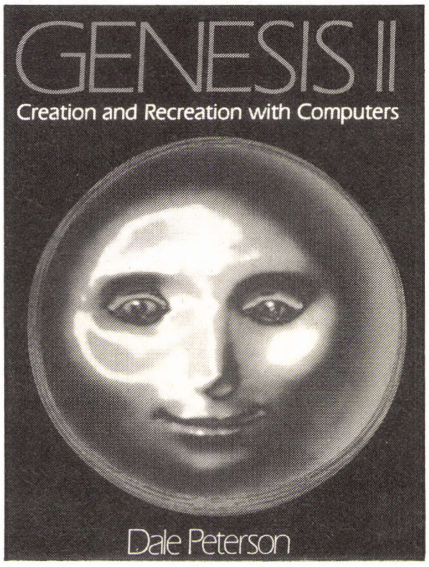


THE COMPLETE HANDBOOK OF PERSONAL COMPUTER COMMUNICATIONS

Alfred Glossbrenner
St. Martin's Press
325 pages/$14.95

If you want your computer to manage electronic mail, search stores for bargains, bank, book reservations, and do research, this is a useful tome. Sure to become dated as technology evolves, but a good, informal primer.





GENESIS II

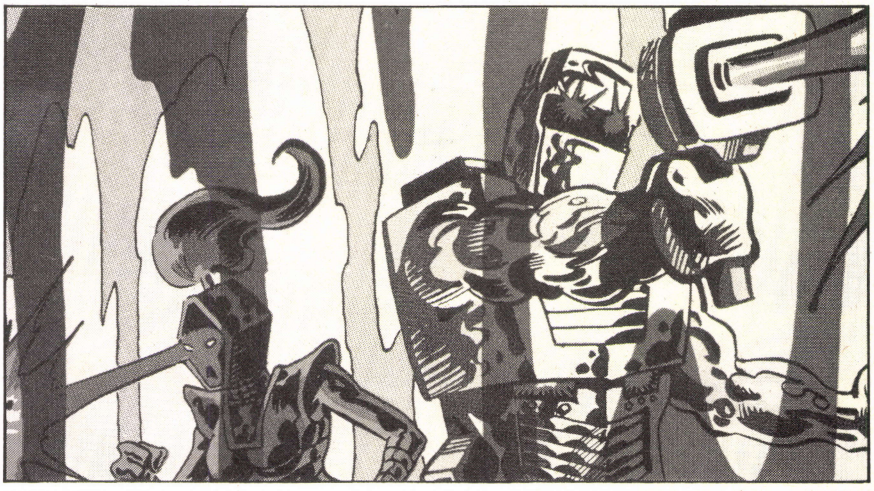
Dale Peterson
Reston
224 pages/$15.95

The book carries a steep price tag, but it's worth the investment. This is an easily-understood guide to how computers create art and music, illustrated with eye-popping color.

THE NEW AMERICAN COMPUTER DICTIONARY

Kent Porter
New American Library
320 pages/$3.50

For the price, you can't beat this as a basic "bluffer's guide" to computer terms. On the other hand, none of the 2,000 definitions is as detailed as a non-layperson might like.



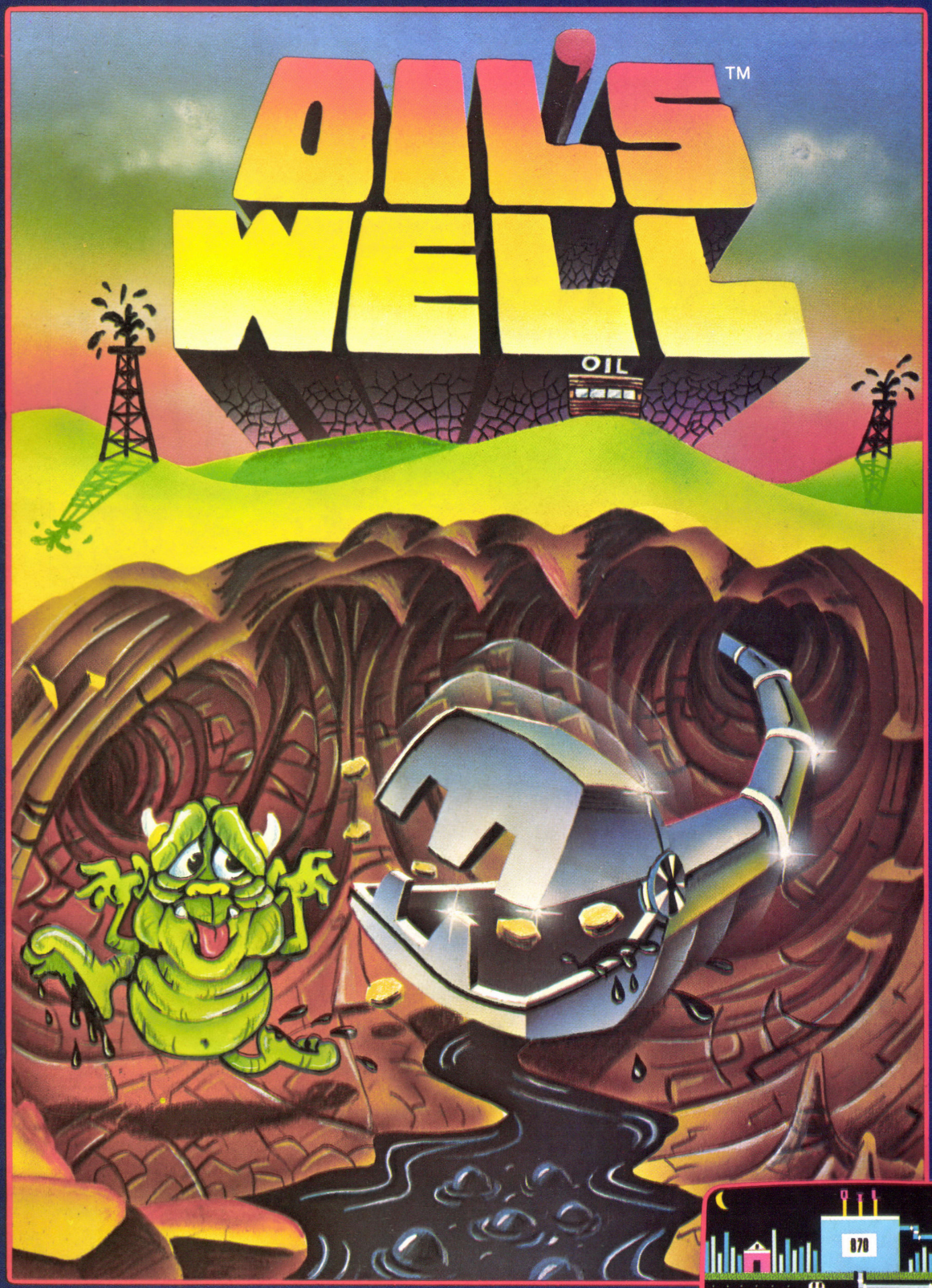
ROM

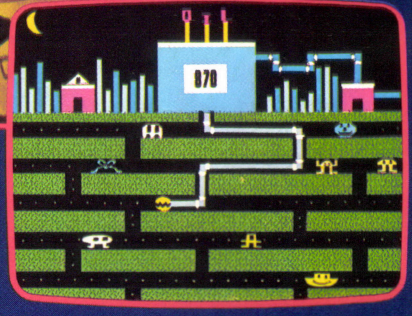
Marvel Comics
32 pages/$.60

If you think Tron is the end-all of hi-tech superheroes, pick up a copy of *Rom* for nifty gadgets, surprisingly sombre tales, effective characterization, and lots of action. It'll be a nice break from all the online/glossarial reading you'll be doing.

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Editor's note: In the August and September issues of VCI, and in anticipation of this—for want of a better term—Disaster Issue, we invited our readers to write in and tell us which videogames, computergames and coin-ops were the worst they had ever seen or played. Stories of faulty hardware, company deceptions, and general incompetence were also welcomed. Our readers responded; their terrible vengeance is displayed here for all to read. "Tremble, ye mighty, and despair!"

To the Editors:

I got burnt on two Atari 2600 cartridges and I'm only too glad to clue you in:

Swordquest from Atari. Dull maze. No enjoyable sound effects. No feeling whatsoever of being in the Middle Ages. The hero is bland, not a brave knight. How can you care about him?

Amidar from Parker Brothers. Your ape looks like monkey doo. The cannibals and pigs hardly move and look like nothing at all. They should at least move their legs or something. The two mazes are static; the game got boring after about three minutes.

Edward Thomas Robinson
Reading, MA

To the Editors:

What bugs me most is the severe and rapid depreciation of videogame cartridges and systems. Cartridges I paid $29.99 for six months ago are now advertised at $4.99! And game systems such as



© 1983 John Costanza

the Atari 2600 now sell for the same price as a cartridge did a year or so ago.

As for the worst game, it would have to be a toss-up between Atari's *Home Run* and *Human Cannonball.* These games aren't worth the boxes they're packed in!

The most annoying games in my book are those in the *Swordquest* series. I had the misfortune of playing *Earthworld* but was lucky enough to get my money back on it. It is not a game at all, but a pointless, frustrating torture chamber.

Things are looking up for me, however. I am now the proud owner of a ColecoVision and have not been let down yet!

William Simpson
Los Angeles, CA

To the Editors:

Here are a few of my pans for your future shattering expose.

Worst Audio!

1. *Suicide Mission.* Fingernail/blackboard equivalent.

2. *Fireball.* Uninspired, *Pong*-like annoyance.

3. *Donkey Kong* for Coleco. Repetitive, grating be-bop.

4. *Riddle of the Sphinx.* Especially hard to take while digging.

In all of these cases, the pathetic sound effects not only render the games virtually unplayable but make one want to bash one's videogame against a nearby rock cliff.

Worst ColecoVision Games!

1. *Space Panic.* This one will drive you insane if you play it for longer than one hour.

2. *Cosmic Avenger.* Unfair game that desperately needs rapid-fire and new joysticks. Blinky, VCS-like graphics.

3. *Smurf Rescue.* The graphics (as with *Zaxxon*) do not live up to the publicity mock-up; after you've done it once, you've seen it all.

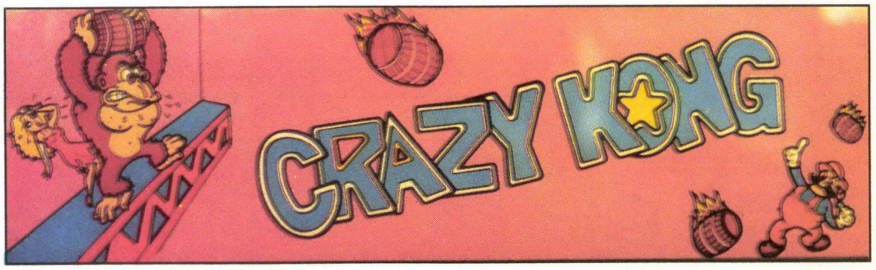
4. *Pepper II.* Another %★$#* maze game for Coleco. Enough already!

Worst Joysticks

1. Intellivision disc. Uncontrollable.

2. ColecoVision. "State of the art, arcade-quality." My eye! Stiff, poorly-built fiascos. It tells you something when people use their Atari VCS joysticks to play Coleco's games. I think Coleco should get the *Audacity of the Year* award for passing them off as real joysticks! Phooey!

J. Cirile
Yonkers, NY







While we're on the subject of rip-offs, chicanery and deception, Editor Jeff Rovin was touring the Connecticut arcades and discovered these suspiciously familiar coin-ops. Whoever "created" these games and cabinets probably thought they were being clever. 'Leech' is closer to the mark.

To the Editors:

Remember the television ad for Intellivision last Christmas? That was the lowest trick I've ever seen.

They showed us a beautiful keyboard and on the computer monitor was a baseball game (much like Coleco's) with incredible graphics. They said, "Why buy the others when you can have this?"

Well, I've had a glimpse of the Intellivision keyboard in magazines and such and the question is: "Why buy that when I can pay for root canal work?"

They used the ad to keep people from buying the new third wave systems. That is all well and good . . .if they keep their end of it.

It was a dirty trick that shouldn't go unnoticed.

Mark Welfley
Akron, OH

To the Editors:

Don't Get Mad, Get Even—is that the idea? Well folks, I am boiling mad and would just love to get even with Coleco Industries.

I am a ColecoVision owner and love the system. However, Coleco's advertising and release strategy over the past three months gives credence to the saying. "The best laid plans of mice and men oft times go astray." I think a pack of mice ought to take over Coleco management

In Coleco's infamous two-page magazine ad which was all over the videogame mags in the spring, they showed off some amazing new hardware and software to be released this summer. Not a single item has come out according to their release dates. They should have used 75% of the ad to caution their expectant audience with the words: "estimated release dates!"

Then Coleco had their fans drooling over the Super Game Module which was supposed to be released in August. It died on the operating table! Why bother with all the hoopla when they can't even produce it?

But wait! You can play the same super games on the much-publicized Adam computer. Too bad it costs almost four times as much as the module was supposed to.

Finally, and most importantly: for all their talk, they just can't seem to get any new games out there. New blood is needed. Over three months without a release is pathetic in today's marketplace. I therefore suggest that Coleco put up or shut up . . . before Atari knocks them right off their pedestal.

Jeff Marx
Wantaugh, NY

To the Editors:

For the last couple of years, I have been buying every videogame magazine published, to my knowledge. I have always considered your magazine to be the highest in quality in all aspects.

In your September issue you asked for people to write to you to inform you of clumsiness and incompetence in the videogaming field. Well, I am sad to tell you that the very copy I am referring to, the September issue, had eight pages missing and eight others duplicated from the same issue in their place. I have no idea what the missing pages contained and, to be very honest about it, I was very mad when I discovered it.

I don't know if this is the only copy like this. At three dollars per issue, any missing information is a loss.

Well, you wanted people to inform you of incompetence.

James A. Land
Logansport, IN

You bought a freak copy, Bill. It was an error at the printing plant. We've sent you a fresh and perfect copy of that issue. Our apologies.

To the Editor:

Make no mistake about it, the games *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween* are harmful and dangerous. A disgrace. Jim Clark's reviews and perceptive insights were right on.

My nomination for the biggest hype/biggest bust goes to the ColecoVision *Donkey Kong.*

Philip Edwards
Fresno, CA

To The Editor:

At fifty cents a pop, and with those iffy controls, *Dragon's Lair* is a rip-off. I lost all my disco money in the thing before I discovered that it was more fun to watch than to play

D. Jannsen
Glen Cove, NY

To The Editor:

I still cannot believe that Fox Games took a property like *Alien,* with all its potential for horror, menace, suspense and claustrophobia . . . and turned it into a *Pac-Man* knock-off! I mean, the game is cute just like you guys said! I think I played the game once and put it in my drawer and spent the rest of the time I would have spent playing it plotting my revenge on Fox. This is it, I guess. Pretty lame too.

Look at a game like *Wizard of Wor.* The music alone makes my pulse race. Although I'm not crazy about that game either, at least it is suspenseful.

Fox has my twenty five bucks, and I'm angry about it.

Richard Faylin
Miami, FL

To The Editor:

Though I didn't at first, I hate all videogames now. *Hate them!*

I gave my boyfriend an Atari for his birthday, and now, whenever people come over to visit us, he drags out the videogame and we play it for most of the night. We used to talk or play board games or the dictionary game (my favorite) . . . now we watch TV.

Your magazine, and the other ones, like to use the word 'interaction' as if you were proud of yourselves and computers and videogames. I just want you to know that conversation has all but died in my house. I feel like *I'm* brain-dead!

Name Withheld
Houston, TX

To The Editor:

Your adoration of Activision's every release cost me money, and I'm mad at both you and that company. On your recommendation, I bought *Oink!* for my kids. I'd estimate that we played that turkey for all of three minutes (between the three of us) and we haven't played it since. Talk about tedious! Monotonous!

While I'm at it, my kids wanted me to tell you that they thought *M*A*S*H, Spider Man* and *Bugs* are the worst games they've played. They played them at their friends' houses. Maybe you'll be getting letters from *their* folks.

Joseph Bruno
Maplewood, NJ

To The Editor:

I just wanted to write to your "Don't Get Mad, Get Even" column, because I went out and spent my hard earned money on two home videogames that were absolute dogs. They were *ET* by Atari and *Skiing,* from Activision. The *ET* game had nothing to do with the movie, and it was pretty dumb. *Skiing* was even dumber, because there was nothing to it. From now on I'm only going to buy games that I have played first, and I recommend that your other readers do the same.

J.P. McClernan
Strafford, CT

To the Editor:

Since you invited us to not get mad, but get even, I thought that I would drop you a line and let you know about two games that I thought were very bad. The first one was *StarMaster* from Activision. I know that a lot of people like this game (including my husband) but I felt that the illusion of flying through space just didn't quite make it. As far as I am concerned, we wasted our money on this one. The second game that was a big bust was *Pac-Man.* This has got to be the most boring game of all times. Both of these games were a while lot of nothing.

Lauren Foti
Westport, CT

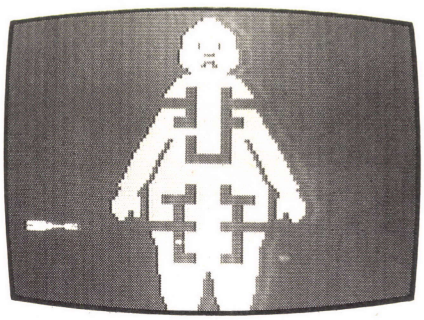
To the Editor:

I can't believe that I actually went out and bought the two Atari *Swordquest* games, *Earthworld* and *Fireworld.* These games were so bad they were unplayable. The directons were confusing, and the graphics were horrible. I was entirely unable to distinguish either what was going on, or determine if I was winning or losing.

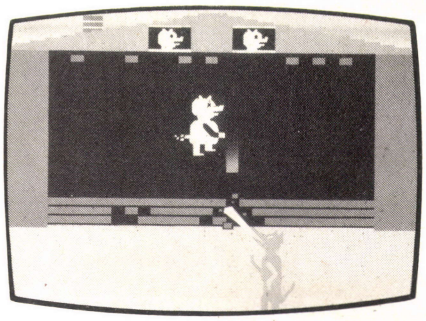
Robert Jaye
Fairfield, CT



Dragon's Lair.



M*A*S*H



Oink!

THE NAME OF THE GAME

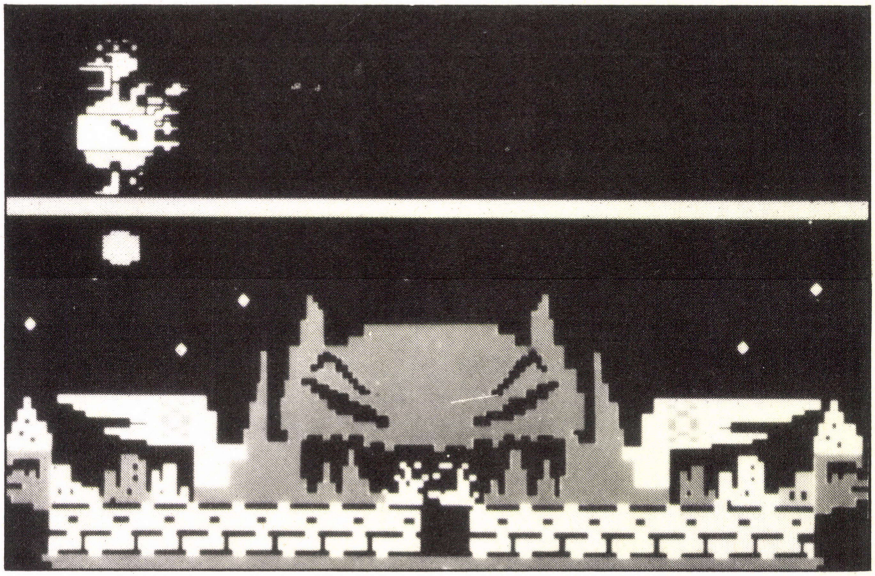
By Bill Spangler

What does a videogame need to be a success? Colorful graphics? Levels of increasing difficulty? A tie-in with a hit movie?

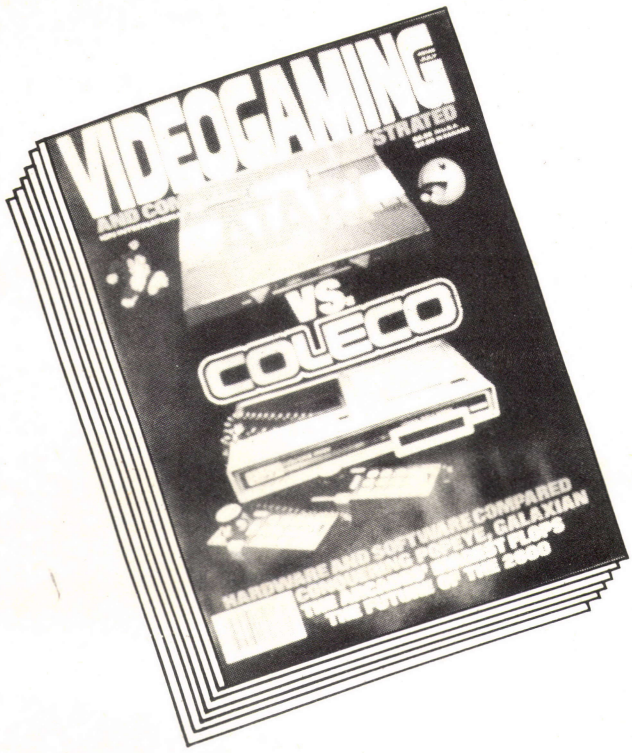
What a videogame needs to be a success in today's competitive market is a good catchy name.

Naming a videogame—or any other product, for that matter—is not a simple task. A bland or unappealing name will turn off potential players. How many people, for instance, would have looked twice at *Pac-Man* if it had been named *The Yellow Thing With the Big Mouth?*

Therefore, as a service to game designers everywhere, we are now offering our never-fail Name-Your-Own-Videogame Chart. All you have to do is take one word from column A, one from column B and one from column C to create a unique and colorful name guaranteed to sell any game.



A	B	C
SPACE	DUNGEON	ATTACK
STAR	DEMON	DUEL
GALACTIC	PLANET	PATROL
COSMIC	VORTEX	BLASTERS
HYPER	SPIDER	FIGHTER
SUPER	DRONE	ARMADA
TURBO	BOMBER	TREK
DEATH	SWORD	QUEST
SOLAR	ROBOT	BLITZ
STELLAR	EMPIRE	COMMANDOS
LUNAR	FORTRESS	RAIDERS
FIRE	GREMLIN	AVENGER
LASER	LEGION	PURSUIT
MYSTIC	ZOMBIE	STALKERS
DOOM	MONSTER	MAZE



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RAMblings



SPITFIRE ACE
MicroProse Software
Atari 400/800/1200
32K, Basic Cartridge

Here's your chance to find out what flying a W.W.II fighter plane was like...with less dire consequences, to be sure.

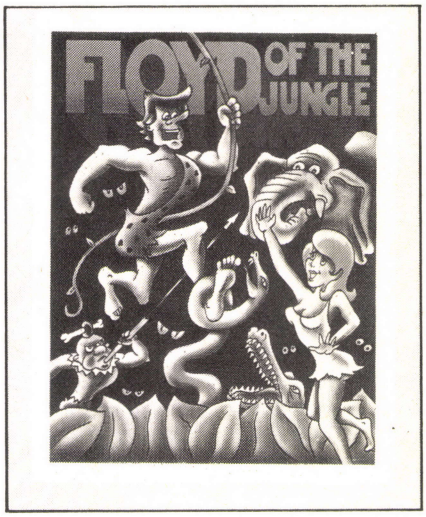
After loading, a menu appears. Choose your scenario from one of the following: France, Dunkirk, Fighter Sweep, Night Attack, Blitz, London, Malta, North Africa, Cologne, D-Day, V-1, Ruhr and ME-262.

Once you start, play continues until you amass five victories or lose your plane. As you survive each scenario, you automatically graduate to the next one. Before entering your plane, you will be briefed on your mission and allowed to select difficulty options.

You need two joysticks to fly your plane, one for a throttle and the other for control. The view is from out of the cockpit. Instrumentation consists of an altimeter, speedometer, compass, power setting, ammo gauge and rear view mirror. As you are flying, you can perform many maneuvers such as rolls, dives, stalls, turns, etc. The plane reacts excellently to the controls. There are daylight and night flights available, but day flights present their own problems: when you fly into the sun, there is considerable glare. The enemy planes may also come up from behind. If this happens, you will be shot down, unless you take evasive action.

This is one of the finest flight simulations I've ever seen. In addition to the fourteen scenarios, there are four difficulty levels to choose from. The graphics are quite good, though they are essentially the same throughout all the scenarios. You may miss the ability to take off or land; the game does not allow for that. But it does allow you the option of bailing out, ditching your plane-which requires some fast thinking under fire.

–Lenny Nelson



FLOYD OF THE JUNGLE
MicroProse Software
Atari 400/800/1200
32K+ Basic Cartridge

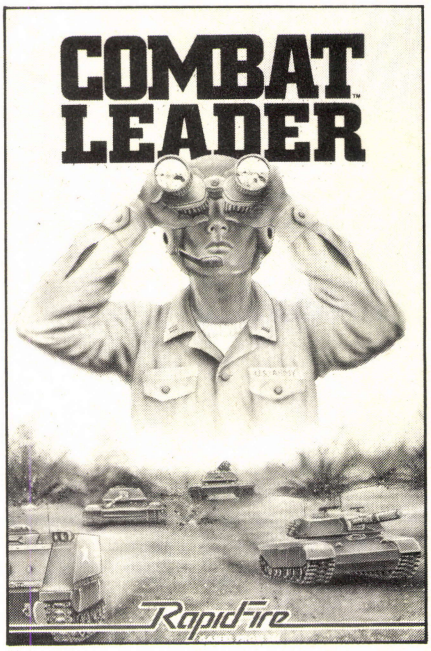
Similar to *Jungle King* or *Jungle Hunt* in theme and kin to *Donkey Kong* et al in gameplay, *Floyd of the Jungle* is an interesting cross-pollination. The most intriguing aspect is that up to four players can compete at the same time. During one-player games, the computer controls three of the players, Harpo, Chico and Grouch. You name your player, and start deep in the African Jungle. You must race against all odds through the deadly jungle to rescue the lovely Janice.

The first screen consists of seven levels. To reach Janice (on the fifth level), you must run, jump, climb ropes, dodge snakes, evade pygmy tribes and survive attacks by alligators, elephants and tigers—and you must do it faster than the three other players. On your way to the top, you can gather extra points by grabbing birds and punching out pygmies. If a player is killed, he or she must start over again at the bottom. Once a player reaches Janice, the scores are tallied and shown on an intermission screen. This screen appears after each play screen and shows the number of wins, birds captured, pygmies punched and total points.

Play screen two has eight levels and is similar to screen one except that you must go through caverns and avoid pygmy darts. Play screen three has six levels and is the most difficult. There is a river to cross, several rows of animals and treacherous snake pits. After the third play screen, the game ends.

In the highest difficulty level (the third), there are five play screens. Though gameplay is familiar, there are enough new wrinkles and doses of wit to make this a worthwhile purchase...if you're looking for a multilevel climbing game.

–Lenny Nelson



COMBAT LEADER
Strategic Simulations
Atari 400/800/1200
48K, Machine language

Combat Leader, one of the Rapid Fire Series games from SSI, pits you and your army against a computerized foe. It simulates actual combat using tanks, vehicles, infantry

men, machine guns, anti-tank weapons and mortars.

The game is broken down into several scenarios: Novice, Intermediate, Build your Own Game, Attack Enemy, Seize and Hold Position, Mobile Defense and Reconnaissance.

In the novice game, you command a platoon of five tanks. Your mission is to seek out and destroy the five computer-controlled tanks. The battle field is three screens tall (scrolling top to bottom) and consists of fields, trees, rocks, depressions, and hills. Your platoon's defense and visibility depend upon where each tank is. You may command the entire platoon or each tank individually. As you move your tanks north (controlling speed, direction, fire, etc.), they will send you information of the dispositions of the enemy.

Throughout all the levels, the action is vivid and fast-paced. And, of course, from the novice level on, the game becomes quite complex. Be forewarned: you will have to spend some time with the instruction booklet, as the number of men, vehicles and weapons that are involved increases. Logistics also becomes an escalating concern: you will have to consider such minutiae as tank repairs and the number of men on a scouting patrol. The Build your Own Game level (design a battlefield and staff it) is a genuine plus.

This is one of the finest offerings from SSI.

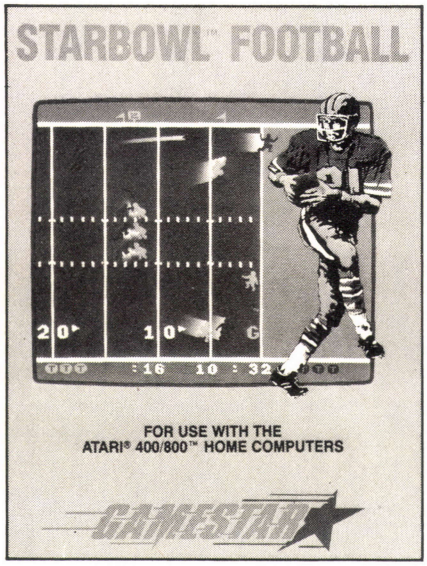
–Lenny Nelson

STARBOWL FOOTBALL

Gamestar
Atari 400/800/1200
24K, Machine Language

There is a tradeoff involved with *Starbowl Football;* the maximum number of players per team is only six; however, each of these players is programmable, requiring your individual attention. Once the ball is snapped, gameplay is fast and frantic. Passing can be quite frustrating. If you are willing to accept those conditions, this game may be for you.

The game consists of 2-6 man teams on a horizontally scrolling



screen. You have your choice of two game speeds (college or pro) and two play options (one or two player). The game starts with both teams (Red and Blue) on the field during the playing of the National Anthem. Following the Anthem, the teams line up for the kickoff. At a press of the joystick button, red kicks off to blue (you to computer). After the return man is tackled, play selection begins.

First offense: your offense consists of six men: three linemen, two receivers, and a quarterback. Play selection is made via the joystick. The selection is made in four steps. First, choose the top receiver's pass pattern (out, screen, fly, slant in), then the blocking assignments (pass, top, bottom, trap middle), and finally the bottom receiver's pattern. Pressing the joystick at a certain place will determine which receiver the ball is thrown to. You control the quarterback. Once in the huddle you have only thirty seconds in which to snap the ball. If you fail to do so, you will be penalized five yards for delay of game.

The most difficult and frustrating aspect of the game is passing. Pressing the button makes the quarterback throw the ball. Once the ball is released, you gain control of the receiver. Pressing the button again causes the receiver to raise his arms to catch the pass. Since the button must be hit at the exact moment the ball reaches the receiver, the odds of catching the ball if a defensive cornerback is covering you are only about 10%.

Passing takes a lot of practice and patience. But don't get frustrated; once you master it, you may become obsessed with trying to beat the computer. Beating the computer on the college level is fairly easy if you mix your passes and runs. However, don't expect to beat the computer in the pro game for some time. Punts, field goals, and fumbles also add to the excitement of the game.

When playing defense, you control the free safety, and select the defensive moves just as you did the offense (top defender, line rush, and bottom defender). Your free safety can roam around before the play begins. This allows for blitzes and, alas, offside penalties. It also accounts for interceptions.

Just a word of advice: When playing against the computer, the computer tends to run to the bottom of the screen most, tends to pass to the top of the screen, and can usually be sacked on third and short if you blitz (use the fly coverage for both receivers).

All things considered, Starbowl Football is an excellent game to play and fun to watch. There is even a halftime break, during which time you can go to your locker room and shout at yourself.

–Lenny Nelson



"Take us to your electronic game center."

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The Best And The Brightest

By Robert J. Sodaro with the aid of Jim Clark and E.C. Meade

Theodore Sturgeon, the writer of horror fiction, some years ago coined Sturgeon's Law; it stated, quite simply, that ninety percent of everything is junk. (Who would know better than a writer of horror?)

In this issue we have already detailed some of the disasters and knock-offs that have prevailed in the videogame industry. But in the interest of balance—and to prove that we are not immune to positive reinforcement—we now bring you our opinions of which are the best game systems, the best game companies, and the best games for each system.

Contrary to Sturgeon's Law, most of what has been produced in this field is not pure junk; it is only when one company sets a standard for excellence that the previous efforts, or the substandard newer ones, begin to lose their lustre. This industry has grown at a dizzying pace; new standards have been set amost weekly. In such an atmosphere, the efforts of well-meaning and innovative people all too often are denigrated, misinterpreted, forgotten or dismissed.

There. We have memorialized the limbo dwellers. Elsewhere we have skewered and basted the snake-oil salesmen. Now, on to the best and the brightest!

To begin with the various game systems, we have determined that the number one game system, bar none, is the Atari 5200. Yes, we realize that back in July we gave the nod to Coleco's ColecoVision, but after giving both systems six months to "strut their stuff", we feel the smart money is now on Atari's 5200. The reasons are two-fold: hardware and software. On the hardware side, the Atari's controllers are far superior to all of the other systems. While there are better controllers that are made for other systems (which will be discussed later) the 5200 original controllers are the best that can be used with the 5200.

Beyond this, the actual look of the game unit is much more appealing than its competitors. The 5200 has that trim and sexy feel of the future. Also, games take less time to "load up." When the game is plugged in and the system turned on, you will be subjected to only about five seconds of the Atari logo and game title, as opposed to about twice that time for ColecoVision.

In terms of software, we have noticed a marked sobriety and a greater nuance and depth to the 5200 games. The colors are subdued, not distracting. Also, there are more of the popular arcade games on Atari software than on any other systems. The 5200 games are fast, challenging and there is a true variety in the library thus far available.

Number two, and not really that far behind, is ColecoVision. Advantages for this system are its expanded memory capacity and its sophistication in electronic design. The system also offers a variety in both hardware and software. There is something in this system for everyone's tastes. While its expandibility and various peripherals *should* make it the number one game system, they unfortunately do not. It almost seems that Coleco's hardware barrage has become more of a marketing come-on than anything else.

People who are impressed by a variety of hardware are sure to disagree with us on this point, but very often, simple is better. With all of its vaunted hardware and the switching around of all the peripheral controllers and whatnot, there is far more that can go wrong and break down with this system. And once all these peripherals are added (which do not greatly enhance the software library), the less expensive ColecoVision will wind up actually costing far more than the 5200.

The third best system is the now-defunct (but still kicking) Astrocade

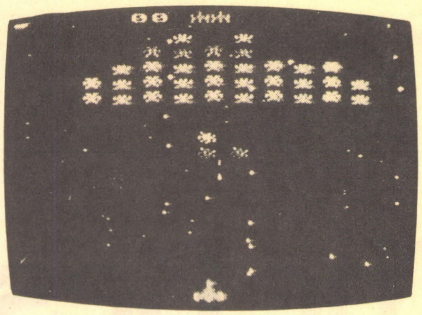
system. (Incidentally, the fact that Astrocade is now out of business is the only reason that it is in third, rather than second place.) Still, ignoring this small detail, it had all the other game systems beat by light years. Not only does it have three games and a calculator built into the console, all of its games are totally original. There are no licensed games or knock-offs among their library. The controllers are in all probability the best ever designed. They are pistol grips, and thus allow for greater game control.

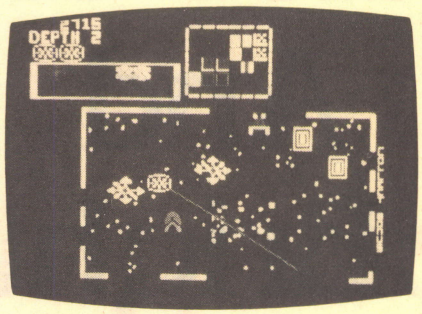
The fact that the system is no longer on the market should not dissuade people from seeking out and finding one. They can be picked up for a song, assuming of course that they can be found. Astrocade was a small company and simply ran out of money. They did not have a major corporation backing them (Atari has Warner, ColecoVision/Coleco, Intellivision/Mattel, and Odyssey has Magnavox/NAP); when they went up against these corporate giants, they were simply out-gunned. There is a postscript to their story, as there is still a company or two manufacturing games for this system.

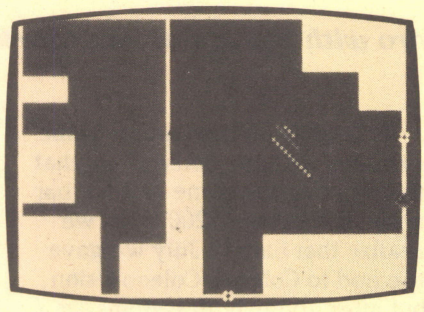
Fourth in line is Mattel's Intellivision. One of the major reasons for their fourth place status is their horrible keypad. There is no joystick built into this pad, it is merely a pressure-sensitive switch that simply does not make it where videogamers are concerned. The pressure pad does not allow for the precision gameplay demanded by videogame afficionados.

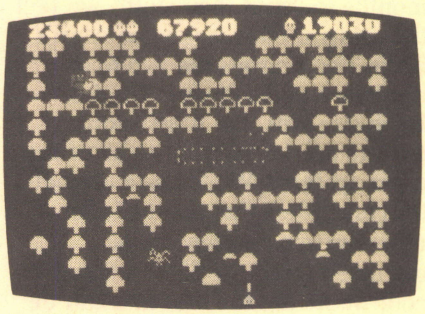
A further major problem with both Intellivision One and Odyssey game systems is that their controllers are not detachable: if players wish to use one of the independently manufactured controllers, they are unable to. Should the unthinkable occur, should the controller break, the entire system must be shipped back to the factory for repairs. Most gamers would probably be lost at sea without their beloved unit for six to eight weeks.

As far as software is concerned, there is just not enough action software available for the Intellivision. To be sure, they *do* offer the very best in sports games, but video sports fanatics are far fewer in number than anyone would care to admit. What gamers truly want are SF shoot-'em-ups and slick strategy games. In the long run Mattel's attempts to provide this type of game do not hold up.









***5200* Galaxian *(top),* Space Dungeon, Qix *and* Centipede.**

Close behind the Intellivision is the 2600 with the Supercharger adapter by Starpath. For anyone who has the 2600 and not the Supercharger, we highly recommend the addition of this peripheral. Games for the Starpath-enhanced 2600 will most assuredly keep the dust off your VCS. Even without the Supercharger, the 2600 is a very good system, if only



The Boss is the best.

because of the vast amount of software available for it. Especially now, when so many stores are unloading their overstock by drastically cutting the prices on them (to under four dollars apiece in some cases.).

Last, and certainly least among the supersystems, is the Odyssey 2, if only because of NAP's inability to decide exactly what it is they are doing. With their plans for Odyssey 3 scuttled in the US (it will still be released in Europe) and their cancellation of three major game cartridges (*Lord of the Dungeon, Power Lords,* and *Pursuit of the Pink Panther*), it is quite possible that the next company to go under will be Odyssey.

Now let us briefly gaze over the river of sticks. Of all the super joysticks currently on the market, Wico has the very best. Their top of the line is The Boss. This joystick features a firebutton in the top of the joystick, and sturdy 360 degree control and quick responses. After Wico comes D-Zyne and their products for Intellivision and ColecoVision.

A distressing number of the sticks we've tested are about as durable as an M&M.

For servicing, the number one position once more goes to Atari With their nationwide network of service centers, no one can hold a candle to them. (*Editor's note: At presstime, Atari announced that they would be closing a number of their service centers. The facts, and their impact, still being unclear, we*

will stand unsteadily on our judgement.) Since they are so far out in front of the pack, everybody else rates a poor man's second. In a market like this serviceability is half the battle. For, while an Intellivision or ColecoVision may in fact be a far better system than the 2600, if you can get your VCS repaired in time for the weekend, but have to ship your Intellivision to the other end of the state for a month and a half, more people are likely to choose the 2600.

As far as the games themselves go we feel that it would be unfair to arbitrarily rate the games regardless of their game system. Thus we decided to list the best five games of each system, regardless of how much better any one game from one system is than that of another game from another system. Therefore, we will begin with the number one Atari 5200.

Topping the list here is *Space Dungeon* by Atari. To quote reviewer Jim Clark, "This is indeed the ultimate space shoot-'em-up." In this game you travel through various sectors of space, battling a veritable armada of deadly ET's while you gather various valuable artifacts. For the best in abstract videogaming, do not overlook *Qix,* in which the player divides up the playfield while pursued by a spark.

Also from Atari is *Centipede.* This game, again from the arcades, is very fast moving and extremely precise in gameplay. From CBS comes *Wizard of Wor,* which we felt was the best maze game for the 5200. With this choice we mean no disrespect for the much-touted *Pac-Man.* It is the general opinion around the office that, while *Pac-Man* is a *nice* game, it is vastly overrated. The last game that we will mention for the 5200 is *Galaxian.* Though *Galaxian* is similar in play to its predecessor, *Space Invaders,* it offers a greater variety in action and tactics.

Moving along to ColecoVision, their top five is led off with *Ladybug,* an excellent maze game that is fast paced and fun to play. The only non-Coleco game on this list is *Q*Bert.* According to our reviewers, *Q*Bert* is "just about perfect." A unique cartridge and a fine addition to the game system. *Zaxxon* is also very true to its arcade inspiration; its 3D simulation and intricate battlefield make it one of the best home games ever designed.

Whereas *Zaxxon* makes our list due to its superb graphics, *Carnival* is here for the opposite reason. The graphics are not nearly as realistic or dimensional as are the graphics in *Zaxxon,* but *Carnival* is such a dandy of a videogame that we felt it demanded to be mentioned.

Next up probably should have been *Donkey Kong,* but its offspring had so much better graphics that it aced its dad out. *Donkey Kong Jr.* is very different from *Donkey Kong Sr.* and yet it captures that same feeling. *Jr.* is not merely the same game with just a few new wrinkles thrown in (as all of the *Pac-Man* derivatives seem to be). All-in-all, *Donkey Kong Jr.* is a splendid cartridge for the whole family.

From the Astrocade system virtually all of the games are excellent, and worth picking up. Still, the more notable games of the line include *Space Fortress, Galactic Invasion,* and *The Incredible Wizard.*

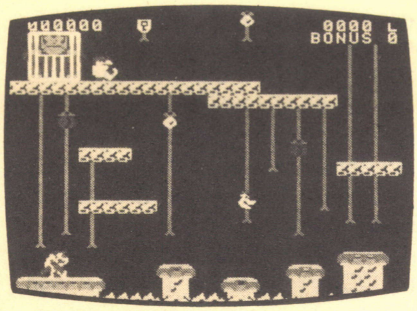
On the Intellivision system, *BurgerTime* is without a doubt the finest game for this system. *BurgerTime* is a delight to play; it involves a certain degree of strategy and it is just plain fun. *Shark! Shark!* is an original game that the family can play and enjoy. *Demon Attack* by Imagic is the only non-Mattel game on this list. As good as the VCS version of this game was, the Intellivision one is that much better.

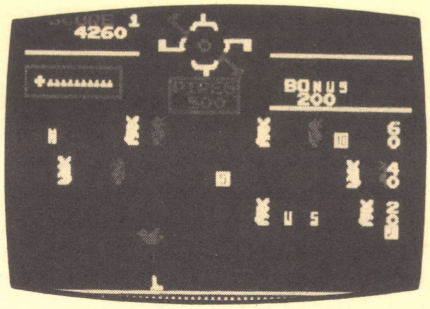
As noted before, the Intellivision system is better known for its sports games than its space adventures. It is for this reason that we are including *NFL Football* on our "best of" list for this system. Its ability to program plays won it our Vista award for best Intellivision sports game of 1983. Lastly for Intellivision is *Space Battle.* In this game the player is required to monitor action that is simultaneously happening on two screens.

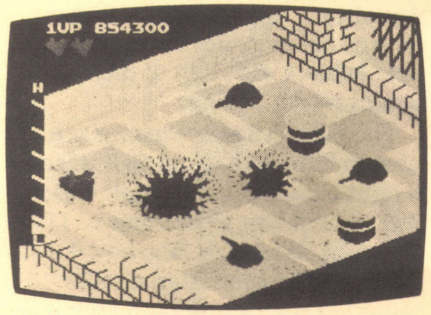
For the 2600, all of the games for the Starpath Supercharger merit recommendation. The best five non-supercharger games are as follows. *Freeway,* from Activision, demands that the player get that chicken across that road. *Freeway* is by far a more exciting and involving game than *Frogger.* Activision's *Kaboom!* is next, with a crazed bomber who wishes to do you some serious harm. The third game on our VCS list will probably shock many of you. The game is *Adventure,* from Atari.

This is one of the earliest "quest" games for the VCS and therefore contains very sparse graphics; still, few of its descendents can match its engaging gameplay. Again from Activision comes the very exciting *Enduro.* This point-of-view race game unquestionably blows the doors off all comers. There is no other game that contains both the feel and power of racing that this one does. Atari brings up the number five position with their still-great *Missile Command.*

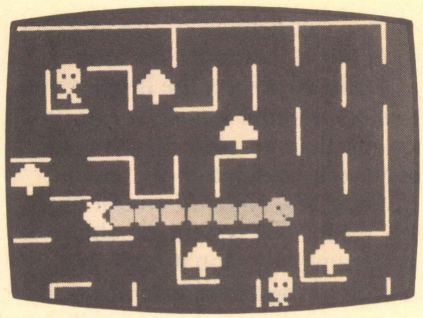
For the Odyssey system the best games are their Master Strategy series, but we felt that we had to dismiss them from our survey. They have the unfair advantage of being both board games and videogames. However, they all come highly recommended by those polled. *UFO*

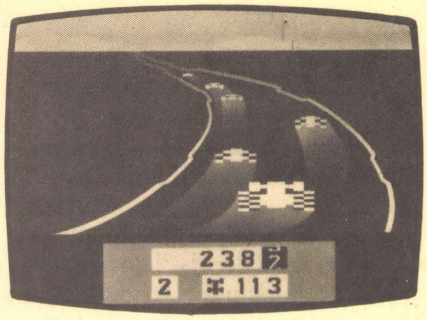


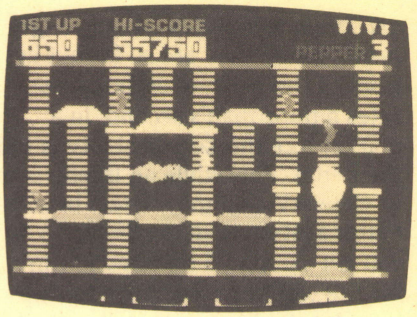




***ColecoVision's best:* Donkey Kong Jr. *(left),* Carnival, *and the mighty* Zaxxon.**







The best!* K.C.'s Krazy Chase (Odyssey), Enduro *(2600) and* Burgertime *(Intellivision.)

leads off the list as our favorite, with *Killer Bees* close behind. *Cosmic Conflict* is third, with *Invaders from Hyperspace* fourth. Rounding up this list is, *KC's Crazy Chase.* Though it is not as good as *KC Munchkin,* it deserves to be here. If you are able to find a copy of the *Munchkin* version around, scoop it up, as it is a great maze game.

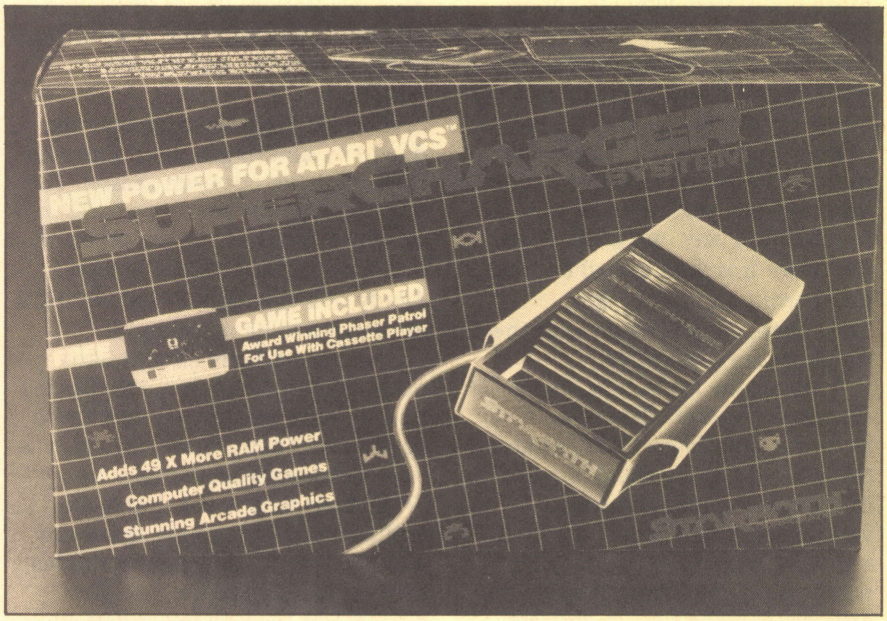
Well, there you have it, the best and the brightest videogames and game systems available. But we felt that there was just one more category that should be considered, and that was an overall rating of the various software manufacturers. We gauged all of the companies based upon how well they were able to consistently produce interesting games. Since the 2600 system has been around for the longest time, there was obviously a greater variety of companies and software to choose from for the purpose of evaluation.

With the 2600 as a base, we determined everyone's position by using a percentage of good games versus lesser games. Here, our only consideration was quality, and not price. For some would argue (and did) that a mediocre M-Network game at $5.00 is better than a good Activision game priced at $30.00

Should a consumer buy a game "blind", that is to say with no prior knowledge of the game, but only the manufacturer, (s)he has the best chance of getting a good game with Activision. Approximately 85% of all Activision games are quality. Imagic follows with 70% of their games worth buying.

The defunct Telesys games are next in line, with about 60% of their output being recommendable. Data Age (which also went Chapter 11) also runs about 60%. Midway down the list is the giant Atari at 50%.

Atari has such a low rating because, while they have produced a far greater wealth of games, they have had as many turkeys as hits. Perhaps if some of the other companies had produced as many games as Atari, they would also have a lower percentage of hit games.



Starpath's Supercharger breathes new life into the 2600.

Parker Brothers and CBS tie at 35%, while Apollo Games comes in at 30%. Just under them at 25% is Tigervision. With a whopping 20% are three companies: M-Network, U.S. Games, and Spectravideo. At the bottom of the heap are the 20th Century Fox Games of the Century and Zimag at 10%. Any company not mentioned in this survey either does not deserve a rating, because they scored so low, or did not produce enough games to accrue an accurate score.

With many of the early leaders in the field dropping by the wayside, those that survive the videogame wars will surely be the best of the best, and will produce some fantastic games! Like the movie business, there will be fewer, but more carefully prepared, offerings. Unlike the movie business, the denominator will not be the "lowest common" . . . but the "highest possible."

Does that sound overly optimistic? Perhaps it is. But we have the highest hopes for the future of videogaming; we take a great deal of pride in its past.

Videogaming will continue to bring families and friends together for an active, rather than a passive purpose. Videogames provide the handicapped and the institutionalized with a measure of relief—call it an escape if you like—an outlet for energies, a goal toward which to work. Video or computergames can become the equalizer between children of unequal athletic or academic abilities. They provide a painless first step into the world of computers.

And they're fun. Or at least, we at *VCI* are sure that the best and the brightest will continue to be.

ADAM BOMB

Continued from page 21

VCI: —and Greenberg was asked about salesmen across the country and their ability to answer questions on the Adam and follow the questions up after the purchase, hand-holding, you know. Greenberg's answer was not one to inspire a whole hell of a lot of faith. Basically he said that the salesman should tell the consumer: everything you need to know is in the box; what you saw on TV is all here. That's a paraphrase, admittedly, but a politician's answer (no answer) would have put us more at ease on this point. Coleco, with a background in toys, may be underestimating the amount of care and nurturing purchasers require . . . and deserve.

OR: Aha! I'm glad you brought that up. Coleco's image is of a toy company, games, Donkey Kong, fun. This undaunting image may be just what consumers need. The very fact that hardcore computer stores may turn up their noses at Adam may be the very thing that makes it a smash. People won't be intimidated.

VCI: Point noted. So much for the novice user. What about more experienced shoppers? Are they going to be pleased with the software situation?

OR: What situation?

VCI: Most computers one could choose to buy already have plenty of software in existence. Software is a major factor in a computer purchase decision. How much? How good? Well, Adam will be released with virtually none. Further: who is going to develop software for it? The fact that Coleco is going with an entirely new memory system—the digital data packs—is a gamble in itself. This isolates them utterly. And prior to the release of the format code, no other companies can come forward and announce that they will be developing software for it. Still more are going to wait and scrutinize sales. And if Coleco misses Christmas . . .

OR: Yeah yeah. We heard all that.

VCI: Everyone is watching, waiting. If sales are poor, it may be up to Coleco to support the Adam by itself. And with their record of promises made, promises kept . . .

OR: Coleco has said that many programs will be available simultaneously with the release of Adam, and that ten or more will be released over the months to follow. I believe them.

VCI: And we hope your faith is justified. Look, all we're saying is that Coleco has taken an incredible gamble with this computer and with the haste in which they're trying to release it. Quite a bit is at stake; at the same time, they stand to gain a permanent place for themselves in the computer market for years to come. We just fear that—

OR: Don't say anything! You journalists! Always so negative! Always looking for something to tear down, never to praise. Well, I for one will wait for the Adam to be released before I make *my* judgement. I bid you good day. Oh, and by the way . . . that danish was stale. Horrible!

VCI: Bye now.

VCI Art Director: Anybody seen my gum eraser? □

RABBIT

Continued from page 47

THE LAND OF LEDGES

The thirty-one ledges are arranged in five vertical rows of three ledges, separated by four vertical rows of four ledges. During the first two ledge screens, no color change occurs when rocks are dropped from above, so any pattern which will quickly change the color of all ledges without backtracking will work fine. This usually means hopping around the perimeter until the rabbit's come full-circle, and then spiraling your way inward. Just watch out for those rocks.

Fortunately for the rabbit population, the man who hurls the rocks must go off-screen briefly to pick up each rock he decides to throw. This gives our furry hero time to hop around. Also, since the man will always try to drop a rock directly onto the rabbit, through careful hopping you can control which vertical row of ledges will have its color changed by the rocks. For many reasons, this should be the center of three ledges.

By repeatedly hopping out to the sides of the screen and then back to the center before the man returns with a rock, you will be able to complete the entire screen except for that middle row. Then, the next time the man goes for a rock, a few quick hops will finish the screen. If you were to leave an outer row for last, the man could easily get a rock and be back in position to crush the rabbit in no time.

As the game progresses, the man, and his falling rocks, move very fast. Isf you have to wait in the central row for a rock to drop, stay on the bottom ledge. This will give you more time to hop out of the way. Also, limit yourself to only four jumps away from the central row, and four hops back, while the man goes for a rock. This will allow you to reach the outermost ledges, while preserving the work already accomplished.

COMMENTS

Once the basic game is mastered, a flip of the difficulty switch will provide even faster action and a diving turtle, necessitating the development of entirely new strategies. Since Rabbit Transit contains a two-player version, the difficulty switches can also be used to handicap an advanced player when hopping against a beginner.

As the first "cute" game from Starpath, *Rabbit Transit* is fun and fast-paced entertainment for the whole family. Adorable graphics and gameplay should keep most players hopping for quite awhile. □

ELEC. PIZZA

Continued from page 24

visible from the waist up. According to Morgan, Showbiz's robots have three times the animation of their competitors. During a ten minute show, they will go through 53,000 different positions.

Showbiz also believes in maintaining a state-of-the-art video arcade. They have brought *Dragon's Lair* to all of their locations, and have even shown a tv commercial in some cities just focusing on their new game. But Morgan is even more excited about their latest acquisition, *Mach 3*, a combat game that uses laserdisc imagery over actual film footage, which will have been installed in all Showbiz restaurants by the time you read this.

Showbiz is also experimenting

with their own play areas, called "Space stations", sports rooms with large video screens and sit-down video games, waiters in costume, and other experimental innovations, all to keep the customers coming back.

Chuck E. Cheese is changing too, according to Nancy Gilbaugh in Pizzatime's communications department. "We're constantly upgrading our shows," she said, citing that changes are made at Pizzatime Theaters approximately every six months. New characters are always being introduced. A recent addition at some outlets are the Beach Bowsers, a group of dogs who sing Beach Boy songs. And, Gilbaugh adds, they're working on improving the pizza, too.

Gilbaugh also says her company is committed to keeping all of the top games in their arcades, although my own experience showed their video rooms to be good, but not great. But all that may change very shortly, because Nolan Bushnell is on the move again.

Chuck E. Cheese began as a small subsidiary of Atari under Bushnell's administration. When Bushnell left Atari, and took Chuck E. Cheese with him, he signed a non-competition agreement with Atari's parent company, Warner Communications. According to the terms of this agreement, Bushnell was not to produce any new videogames until after October 1, 1983.

Both Showbiz and Chuck E. Cheese have their own robot factories, called, respectively, Creative Engineering and Cyberamics. But, while Showbiz has to depend on other companies to supply video games, Bushnell has set up a second company, Sente Technologies, which before October 1 of this year was occupied making target bowling games for Chuck E. Cheese outlets. After October 1, Sente began making videogames as well. While, as of this writing, Bushnell's organization is keeping very close-mouthed about what exactly these new videogames will be, Bushnell has gone on record to say that he expects his new products to revolutionize the industry all over again, and in three years Sente will control 40% of the market. Bushnell is also involved in a computer-aided animation project called Kadabrascope, which will produce Chuck E. Cheese cartoons for the restaurants and cable tv.

Pizza, anyone? □

SUBROC

Continued from page 29

to blow you up if you just drop out of the sky. Therefore, when a missile is headed your way you must either blow it up, or swing to one side to get out of its way. Moving to one side is not always advisable, as the missile may shift with you and catch the corner of your craft. You do not receive any points for blowing up mines or missiles, but it is the best way to protect yourself.

The interceptors are almost easier to catch than the fighters; the interceptors always follow the same pattern mentioned above. If you attempt to keep them in the center of your screen and track with them as they swoop in for the kill, you should be able to eliminate quite a few of them. Note that you will only be able to hit them as they come in for their pass. Once their flight path has bottomed out and they begin to ascend they will rise out of your scope sight, beyond your reach. Instead of wasting shots on them, drop back into the water and pick off a few ships.

Another important item to remember is that when you are lining up shots with enemy ships that are moving horizontally, always try to lead them. Never chase after them. If you attempt to catch up with any craft you will waste far too much time.



The drones are easy to hit. They travel through the water towards your ship and fire torpedoes. However, the ships themselves will never quite reach Subroc. Thus there is never any danger of them colliding with your craft and sinking you.

When you have cleared away the last of the lesser ships, the command ship will descend to finish you off. You will know that it is about to make its move when the screen clears. Once this happens, stop all movement, and let the command ship find you (something it most assuredly will do). As it descends into your viewscreen, attempt to come up from underneath it and burn it within the first couple of seconds. The longer it takes you to blast the ship out of the sky, the harder the task becomes.

If you are unable to destroy it right off the bat, keep shifting your gunsights and force the pilot to come out from behind the screen. Once he does, you have him.

It should be mentioned that it is not necessary (or even possible) to destroy all of the attacking ships. Each squad of enemy vessels will appear on the screen for a specific amount of time. Once the allotted time is up, there is a slight pause in the action as the next group moves into place.

COMMENT

Subroc is a fine translation of the arcade game, though it is not a 3D game. The colors are vivid, the sound effects outstanding (rather like the giant ants in *Them!*) and the gameplay, though limited to aim-shoot, is quite satisfactory. The game allows for the differences in the abilities of the players. For instance, in a two player game, player number one can choose a level four difficulty, while player two is able to pick a level one game.

Subroc is an excellent addition to the ColecoVision game library—one, I'm sure, many players have been hungering for. □

CONQUERING

Continued from page 45

sliding platform, and head up the right side to complete the screen.

LEVEL SIX

Carefully move up three stops and wait for the sliding platform to take you to the lantern. Jump up to the top left to destroy one mutant. Then hop across the top level of platforms to eliminate the mutant at the right. Move back along the top to the middle and walk off of the left side of the central platform. Walk off once more, and jump to the platform to the left.

Take the sliding platform to the center, and jump up to touch the shovel. Work your way to the right to destroy the third mutant and complete those sections before heading back to the middle platform with the mutant and short slide. When the mutant goes to the left, drop down on his right and then leap-frog him when he comes back. You can now kill him, slide down to the moving platform, and finish off the bottom right.

LEVEL SEVEN

When jumping onto or off of the lifts, always jump slightly before the lift arrives so you'll land when the lift reaches the same level. As you complete the platforms on the left side of the screen, be sure to leap onto the pickax platform from almost the center of the lift. This way, you can wait on the edge without touching the pickax until the lift is moving back up. It can then be used to eliminate the first mutant.

From the mutant's ledge, jump up to the left and mask the two platforms joined by a ladder. Then use the lift to return to the mutant's ledge. Watch the third lift from the left until it's at the halfway point heading up. Then quickly leap up to the lantern and across to the right before walking off the platform, onto the lift, just as it reaches the top. Immediately jump again to the right before the lift has a chance to descend, and then to the top of the slide to wipe out two mutants in a row. Finally, use the slide and the nearest lift to complete the rest of the screen.

LEVEL EIGHT

Once you get the hang of the hydraulic lift, this is one of the easiest screens to complete. To operate it, push #5 on your keypad, and then use the joystick to raise and lower the lift. Push the jump button again to reactivate Bounty Bob.

Begin by masking the two platforms joined by the ladder at the right. Don't fall down the slide or you'll be doomed to remain on that small ledge until the timer runs out. Use the lift to reach the upper levels before sliding down at the left. As you jump back to the lift, the shovel will enable you to destroy the mutant one level below. Then complete the platform below before heading back to the top of the screen to slide down and finish level eight.

LEVEL NINE

Officially dubbed the "stomper" or "pulverizer" screen, this one is actually a lot less dangerous than it sounds. The trick here is to walk under the piston-like stompers one at a time rather than trying to run through all four at once.

The entire screen is easily completed by repeatedly climbing up the right side and using the sliding platforms to get to the left. Be sure to mask completely each left-side platform you land on because the sliding platforms can only be used once. Use the slide to return to the bottom and avoid the stompers on your way back to the right.

LEVEL TEN

This screen is a blast. Really! Here Bounty Bob must eat bundles of TNT at the bottom left of the screen before being shot out of a cannon to reach the upper tiers. One bundle will send him to the first tier, three will propel him to the third. Any more, and he goes through the roof. The real problem is that the mutants can't be destroyed and have to be skillfully avoided.

With that in mind, use the first two single bundles of TNT to reach the lowest right and left platforms respectively. Take the double bundles by moving Bob directly under them and jumping up. This time, however, do the left side first. Reach the highest level on the right by taking the remaining single, and double bundle together. To reach the highest left-side platform, take the triple charge furthest left. If you try for the triple on the right, you'll usually end up with six. Finally, when shooting up or sliding down, be sure the path is clear of mutants.

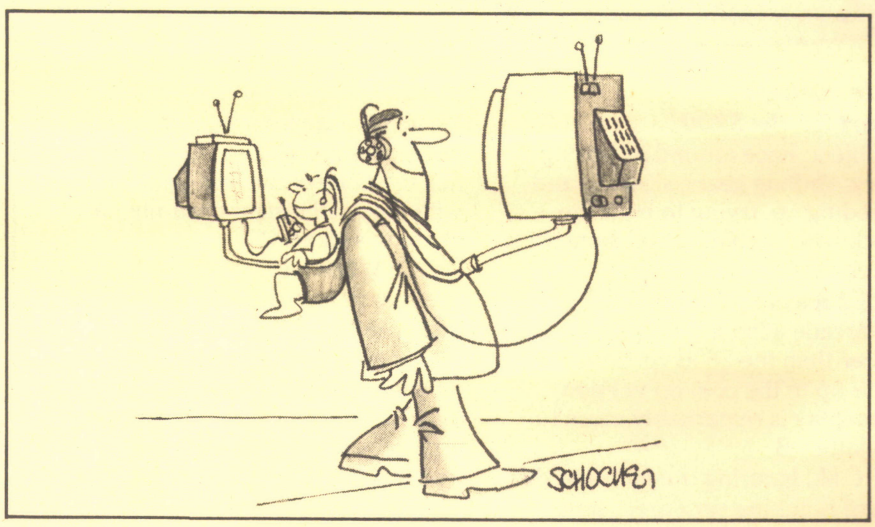
LEVEL ELEVEN

The directions make this one sound like a freebie. "Take the uranium and collect bonus points." What they don't tell you is that to get to the uranium, you must master one of the toughest screens in the entire game.

At any rate, use the sliding platforms to reach the three small ledges on the right. Here you'll find a couple more mutants to jump, and barely enough room to move. Use the smallest sliding platform to reach the central section of framework, and the diagonal lift. Avoiding the slides, complete the platform at the bottom left and let its moving edge take you to within jumping distance of the platform at the lower right. A few more jumps, and a trip down the slide, and you're home free.

COMMENTS

Now that you have the basics, all that's left is to master the techniques required for each level. *Miner 2049er* can't be conquered in a single night, but the thrill of discovering each new screen, and the sense of accomplishment upon completing a level, should hold your interest for as long as it takes. This one may just outlast your joysticks. □



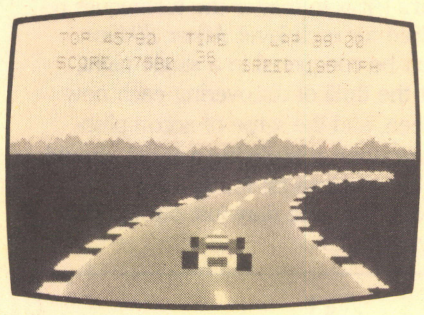


PREVIEW

Continued from page 18

second-long delay between the time you touch a fruit and it falls. C

E.C.M.: A ripoff. I was especially disappointed in the poor definition of the characters. This is another example of Coleco delivering inadequate goods for competing systems. Whoever programmed the 'Tarzan' yell when Jr. jumps ought to be boxed and shipped to Mars to prevent future atrocities. D+

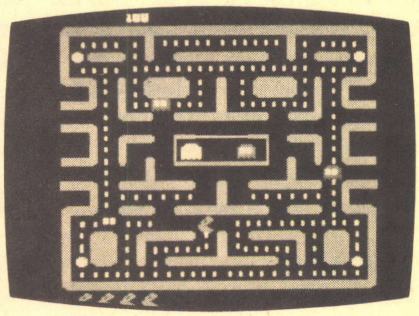


Pole Position
Atari for the 5200

Object: Race around a twining track, shifting gears, slowing and speeding up, trying to beat the clock while avoiding collisions with other cars.

J.C.: It's the same old 5200 story for arcade adaptations: graphics are better than the 2600 version, not quite up to the coin-op version. Gameplay is remarkably close to the latter. B

E.C.M.: Ignoring the fact that this genre is getting *very* tired, and we've got *Pole Position II* coming to the arcades in a few weeks, in and of itself this is a visual treat and a challenging cartridge, far better than *Turbo* for comparable ColecoVision. B



Ms. Pac-Man
Atari for the 5200

Object: Manuever the masticating madame through a maze of dots, avoiding predacious ghosts.

E.C.M.: Yesterday's soup warmed over; I've had my fill of the *Pac-Whatevers.* A serviceable adaptation, if, like all the Atari *Pac-Games,* you don't mind adjusting to a field wider than it is tall. C+

J.C.: My big problem remains the fact that the 5200 joystick doesn't automatically return to neutral when you release it. Your Pac-Person tends to go off unattended. Otherwise, this cartridge captures the feel, gameplay, sounds, and graphics of the arcade original. B+

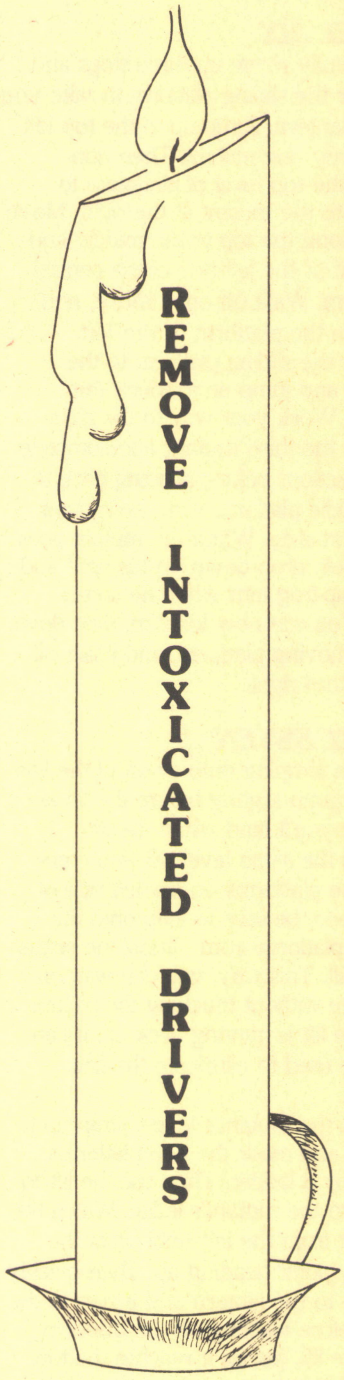
Time Pilot
Coleco for the 2600

Object: Eliminate all aerial enemies in five different time periods starting in 1910 and winding up in the year 2001.

E.C.M.: I suppose it was inevitable that Coleco would release this game in other formats; I only wish they could have made it more interesting. As with its ColecoVision version the graphics are very sparse: just clouds and planes. Anyone who has the *Combat* cartridge that came with the Atari system need not purchase this game. C

J.C.: While I agree with E.C. about the sparseness of the graphics, I disagree about the game's worth. This is a very entertaining game, and far more enjoyable than the fighter pilot mode on the *Combat* cartridge, especially when you reach the 'copters, jets and saucers of the later time periods. C+

"It is better to light one candle, than to curse the darkness."



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Continued from page 50

on the PC monitor) and ending the show. The awarding of the contract and champagne quickly follow, of course, but are not guaranteed by Prentice Hall.

In addition to the images presented with the program, libraries of images will be available on disk for a hundred dollars each. The images include people, landscapes, tools, animals, maps, cityscapes, industrial representations . . . you name it. The program sells for $395.

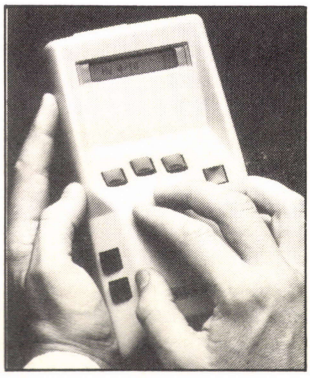
As devised, Execuvision is useful mainly for business people; but consider the possibilities . . . .

GIVE THEM A HAND

Consider this. You are the proverbial executive in a hurry (or professional writer or student); your express bus is stuck in traffic, but if you don't arrive with a finished brief (or chapter or term paper) you will be fired (or failed). What do you do? Why, you whip out your Microwriter and finish the job enroute.

The Microwriter is a hand-held word processor. It has been available for the past year in Britain and the Netherlands from Microwriter Ltd. The Microwriter (We'll tell you now, it sells for five hundred dollars.) contains only five keys, plus a function or command key, and allows the user to type all alphanumeric characters and punctuation and, with practice, do so at 150% of his/her handwriting speed.

The Microwriter weighs less than two pounds and is about the size of a trade paperback book. It uses



The Microwriter.

rechargable batteries and contains 8K of non-volatile memory—good for about five pages of double spaced text. Portions of the typewritten information can be viewed on the self contained LCD display and the rest can be reviewed with ease. The unit boasts editing features such as review, delete, insert and formatting. Finished text can be transferred to a microcassette for further storage or (we knew you were wondering) the unit can be plugged into a printer to produce hard copy.

Microwriter Ltd., located in New York City, claims that most anyone can learn to microwrite in an hour. Amend that. Most young folk might; stodgy, clumsy adults will take a while longer. The principle is this:

The five keys are arranged to conform to the five fingers of the right hand at rest (left handers have no trouble using Microwriter, claims the company). Fingers do not jump from key to key; the letters and numbers are typed by simultaneously striking a number of keys. The striked keys roughly configure to the shape of the letter desired.

For example, the letter 'I' is typed with the index and thumb (straight up and down). To type an 'R' the index, thumb and middle (the top button, representing the top loop of the 'R') are used. For an 'L', it's the index, thumb and little finger (the bottom key, the bar for the 'L'). By visually imagining the letter to be typed, the user should be able to memorize the keys required. And with practice, it should eventually flow smoothly, reflexively.

If nothing else. the Microwriter could give life to a whole new way of diary writing. "Dear Diary: I am having lunch, I can see that nasty Mr. Blatts glaring at me from across the office. Oh no! He's coming this way . . . ."

STOCKING STUFFERS

As we see it, software will be ranked highly on many a Christmas list this year. So, for both the naughty and the nice, here is a round-up of some of the most recent releases.

Quicksilva Ltd., the British software publisher, has opened shop in San Antonio, Texas, with the object of extending their distribution arm through the U.S., Canada, and Latin America. While this move makes Quicksilva's games more accessible to American Commodore 64, VIC-20, and Atari 400/800 owners, it is especially good news for Timex-Sinclair 1000/1500/2000 users, who suffer from a lack of available software.

Quicksilva's latest releases include the following for the ***TS 2000:*** *Xadom* (battle your way through a 3D alien maze), *Velnor's Lair* (sword and sorcery in the Goblin Labyrinth, lousy with demons, trolls, the undead, and the evil wizard Velnor), *Smuggler's Cove* (fall through a concealed cave entrance into a historical fable of horror and Blackbeard's treasure), *3D Strategy* (fast-moving, nerve-racking game of noughts and crosses—tic-tac-toe for you Yank blighters), and *Aquaplane* (ski through marine maniacs, G&T's, regattas, and a great white).

For the ***Commodore 64*** from Screenplay:

Blackjack purports to teach you the techniques that won its designer five million dollars. (The obvious question is: why is he telling *us?*)

Asylum lets you use complete sentence commands to guide your character through 3D rooms and hallways, past wacky inmates and mysterious obstacles, to escape and save the world.

The *Playful Professor* demands correct answers to a series of math problems before he'll let you escape from a ghostly castle. If you answer incorrectly, the professor explains your mistake.

Danger Ranger requires you to brave acid rain and fireballs to collect a treasure.

Pogo Joe bounces across a field of color-changing cylinders, pursued by the Mutated Wonderwhisk.

The *Warrior of Ras* series comprises four games, full of ghouls, goblins, traps, and hidden dangers, which change





From Timeworks: a spelling bee and a shooting spree.

each time you play. In *Dunzhin* you elude the Wyverns to snatch treasure from the dungeon's lowest level. In *Kaiv,* you descend into the bowels of the earth, sidestepping pools of acid and walking dead. *Wylde* takes you on a search for wealth in the wilderness. *Ziggurat* pits you against gruesome creatures in the maze of the Mayan Pyramid.

The way *Ras'* designers spell their game titles compels us to recommend *Spellbound,* an educational contest from Timeworks. The child must joystick-direct a bee around the screen, stringing together the letters of one of twenty words of the user's choice. If the player strings the wrong letter or crosses his/her own path, the bee explodes. Surprise challenges provide bonus points.

Also from Timeworks: *Star Battle,* a strategy game that takes place in a three-dimensional galaxy with sixty-four quadrants. Weapons at your starship's disposal in its struggle against the Scyons include warp and hyperlight driver, phasers, photon torpedoes and a tracking/viewing system, An overlay is included to change the 64 keyboard into OBNAC (Objective Based Navigation and Attack Computer) 3000.

Dropping down to the terran skies, you can learn to pilot a Piper 181 Cherokee Archer with *Flight Simulator II* from SubLOGIC. You get flight manual, full flight instrumentation (avionics included), navigation facilities, high-speed 3D view of the world outside your cockpit—all you need to practice takeoffs, landings, and aerobatics. Weather conditions are also adjustable. The four scenery areas—New York, Chicago, Seattle, and Los Angeles—include over eighty airports, with additional scenery areas available. When you think you've got the right stuff, you can earn your wings in the included World War I aerial battle game.

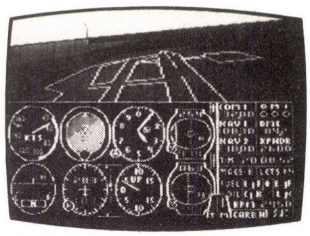
From Infocom: *Enchanter,* a interactive prose adventure. At the command of the Circle of Enchanters, you will explore an abandoned castle filled with strange magical artifacts and find spell scrolls which you must learn to use to overcome dozens of obstacles. Your overall goal is to learn enough magic to rid the kingdom of the evil and increasingly powerful warlock Krill. Included is a user's manual and a sealed parchment from the Circle of Enchanters. Like Infocom's other prose games, *Enchanter* uses the Interlogic programming system, offering a vocabulary of over six hundred words.

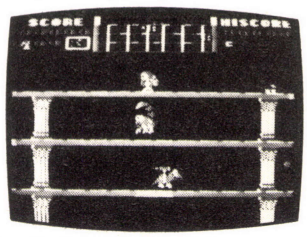
Just made available in C-64 format by Sirius: *Wayout* and *Bandits,* pictured and described in this month's Chip Ahoy section. Soon to be made available in C-64 format by Broderbund: *Drol,* described below.

Available for the **Apple** are the following Avant-Garde releases: *5 Great Games* includes *Animal Bingo* (line 'em up in horizontal or vertical rows), *Jungle Safari* (blow 'em to kingdom come), *Space Defense* (navigate past alien attackers, firing lasers and photon torpedoes), *Sky Watch* (guard the night skies against comets, UFOs, and enemy invasions), and *Air Traffic Controller* (direct runway approaches and landings of airplanes and helicopters—even foil a skyjacking or two). The five game disk is $29.95; each game purchased separately is $9.95, except for Air Traffic Controller ($15.95).

When you tire of *5 Great Games,* you can play—you guessed it—*5 More Great Games,* including *Deep Sea Treasure* (fend off a shark, an octopus, and a submarine to bring up sunken treasure), *Mystery Code* (use paddles to move around the screen deciphering), *Depth Charge* (pilot your PT boat through sub-infested seas), *The Mine Fields of Normalcy* (arrange symbols in a sequence on a mined board), and *Turn 'Em Loose* (duck a rifle-wielding zookeeper while freeing the caged beasts). Again, the five-game disk is $29.95, with individual games going for $9.95 each.

Doctors who like to get in a few holes between incisions with *Hi-Res Computer Golf* can now play *Hi-Res Computer Golf 2.* Like its predecessor, it includes five courses of varying difficulty, with multi-screened fairways, contoured greens, trees, roughs, sandtraps, and watertraps. The player must choose the appropriate club and degree of swing, compensating for wind speed and other constantly changing factors. Added features include auto-swing options, scorecard archives processor, and tournament





Flight Simulator II *does;* Broderbund's Drol *is very.*

A million laughs

SPARE CHANGE™ You are the game-happy owner of the Spare Change Arcade. Two fun-loving, but overworked Zerks—the main characters in your most popular game—have broken loose and are trying to retire from the business. You try madly to stop them. If you can get a coin into the juke box, the Zerks get so caught up in the music, they drop everything and start dancing. You also try popping popcorn and making a pay phone ring—which immediately makes the Zerks stop, answer and start a wild conversation. If you "win" the game, there are rib tickling cartoons by the Zerks to reward your efforts. It's a game full of sight gags, surprises and comedy. From the best. Brøderbund! **For the Apple® II, II+ and IIe. Coming soon for the Atari® home computers in disk format.**

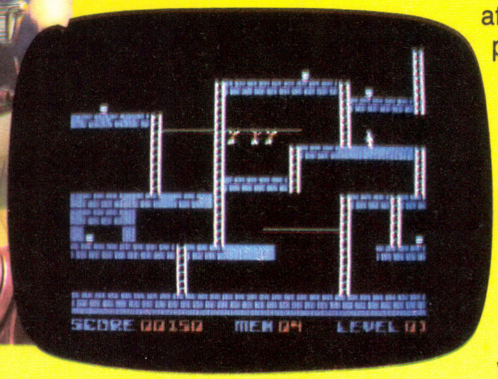




and an endless challenge



LODE RUNNER™ Here's a game that will never stop challenging you. That's because Lode Runner is more than a spellbinding, fast-action game with its 150 different mind-boggling game screens. Lode Runner is also an easy-to-use Game Generator that lets you create your own games. Without any knowledge of programming, you can easily design unique Lode Runnner screens, then bring them to action-packed life. You will maneuver through scene after scene, running, jumping, drilling passages and outfoxing enemy guards in a secret underground hideaway as you pick up chests of gold stolen from citizens of the Bungeling Empire. There's no end to the thrills, chills and challenge. Of course, it's from Brøderbund! **For the Apple II, II+ and IIe. Coming soon for the: Atari home computers (disk and cartridge); Atari 5200™ Super System; Commodore 64™; VIC-20™; IBM® PC.**

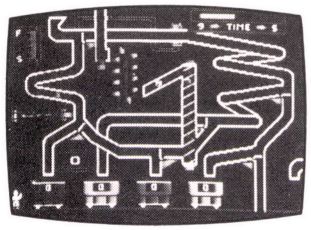


Ask your Brøderbund dealer for sneak previews.

Brøderbund Software **Discover the Difference**

1938 Fourth Street San Rafael, CA 94901

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***Housing is the reward or punishment in* Gumball: from palace to doghouse.**

security option. The green fee is $29.95 for the original version, $34.95 for #2.

Broderbund's *Drol* is exactly that: a game with such oddball obstacles as flying turkeys that turn to Thanksgiving roasts when shot, overweight monsters that hop around tossing lightning bolts, and witch doctors that throw magnets. You are equipped with a rocket backpack, laser gun, and wide-screen laser scope, your object being to rescue two children roaming under a witch doctor's spell through scrolling underground corridors.

If that's not silly enough for you, Broderbund's got *Gumball.* As head sorter of the Sticky Sole Gumball Factory, you must contend with your boss who attempts to undo your work and dental assistants who try to blow up the factory with explosive gumballs. If you succeed, you get a promotion accompanied by a cartoon illustrating your new standard of living.

Both 48K cartridges are designed for the Apple II/II+/IIe.

From Learning Well, producers of some splendid educational games, come six new releases for the II/IIe.

New to their Early Childhood line of games, which are operated by the space bar only, are *Knowing Numbers, Letters and Words,* and *Body Awareness.* Each title features three different gaming activities which Learning Well promises are "fun, colorful, rewarding and comprehensive learning experiences."

Space Math requires first to sixth graders to add, subtract, multiply and divide in order to shoot at Zorlyn spacecraft invading the earth.

Jungle Rescue Spelling, available for grades one to four or five to eight, has players use a helicopter to save monkeys from a fire. To do this, they must type the correct spelling of words, or make the proper multiple choice. Parent or teacher can enter his/her own word lists and view missed words.

That's My Story provides young authors with story starters that set them on the path to writing creatively. At the end of each section, the student poses his/her own "What if?" questions for himself/herself or the next writer. It is also possible to make corrections or change stories.

Also available are the following games described above: *Blackjack, Flight Simulator II* (Apple II), *Enchanter* (Apple II), and *Dunzhin* in the *Warrior of Ras* series. Available soon for the Apple II will be *Capture the Flag* (described below).

For the ***Atari*** computers:

Spellunker from Micrographicimage, a graphics discovery game with over thirty screens. you must pass traps, barriers, ghosts of other explorers who lost their way, and other dangers to capture riches beyond imagination. Sure beats waiting for your IRAs to mature. On disk for the 400/800.

From Sirius, on disk, for the 800/1200: *Capture the Flag.* A split screen shows the player the area of the playfield (s)he occupies, along with a 3D view of the entire maze. The player must avoid capture by his/her opponent (the computer or another player) while searching for the exit. Tempo of the accompanying music tells how close the opponent is.

Also available for Atari are the above-mentioned *Blackjack, Warrior of Ras, Asylum, Playful Professor, Danger Ranger, Pogo Joe, Space Math, Flight Simulator II,* and *Enchanter. Drol* will shortly be available as well.

For the ***VIC-20:***

Plasmania from Sirius, on cassette. See ths issue's Chip Ahoy for depiction and description. Also just released in VIC-20 format by Sirius: *Capture the Flag,* described above.

For the ***IBM PC:***

Blackjack, Dunzhin in the *Warrior of Ras* series, *Asylum,* and *Enchanter* (all described above).

For the ***TRS-80:***

The above-mentioned *Enchanter.*

SUMMER CAMPS, SUMMER NOT

While camps that teach children programming skills are nothing new, adult versions began sprouting up this past summer. Like the kids' camps, most mix learning with outdoor activities over a one-or two-week period. The business-pleasure mix varies greatly from camp to camp, ranging from the bring-your-own-sleeping-bag seminar run by Atari founder Nolan Bushnell in the redwoods of California's Scotts Valley to a $1995 Princess Cruise to Mazatlan, Puerto Vallarta, and Acapulco, with a grueling fifteen hours of classes spread out over the ten days.

While many of the camps do go heavy on the highballs, the concept is an excellent one—even more so for adults than for kids. Adults don't have the option of enrolling in eleventh grade computer math, and generally don't have the time to learn programming on their own. And besides, everyone knows that grownups can't learn this stuff as easily as kids can.

If Allan Sherman were still alive, he'd be singing next summer's number one hit:

Hello Johnny,
Hello Sybil,
From your daddy
At Camp Nybble;
Everything is
User-friendly
And I'll take whatever money you can send me.

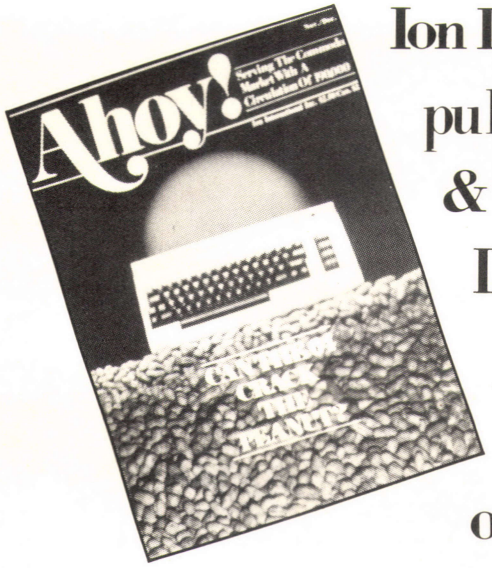
HIGH (TECH) FINANCE

Of course, you can be anti-social and do your learning at home. If it happens to be the SuperCalc spreadsheet program (compatible with the ***IBM PC*** and most CP/M-based machines) you want to master, FlipTrack Learning Systems of Glen Ellyn, IL has produced an audio

Ahoy!

Serving The Commodore Market With A Circulation Of 190,000

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The time has come for AHOY!

Certainly, no magazine can be all things to all people; the gulf between advanced computer enthusiasts and novice users is wide. But there is no law that says a computer magazine must be intimidating, overly technical and dry. Nor, on the other hand, must it condescend.

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PREMIER ISSUE

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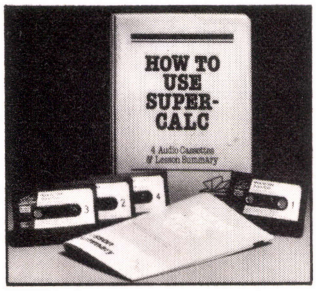
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Fliptrack's audio lesson

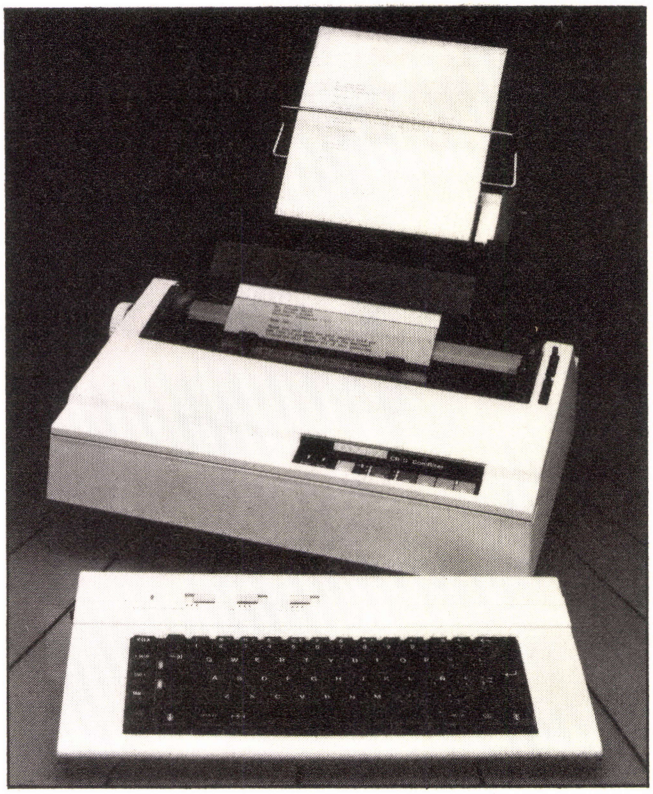
lesson called *How to Use SuperCalc.*

The four tapes talk the user through the development of a cash flow budget, introducing him/her to all the commands and functions of SuperCalc. The FlipTrack format allows you to turn the cassettes over at key points for more indepth explanation and reinforcement. Price of the four cassettes, packaged in a vinyl album with an indexed lesson summary, is $75.00.

You're on your own with *Checkease!* from T&F Software in North Hollywood, CA. The program allows ***Commodore 64, VIC-20,*** and ***Atari*** computer owners to maintain, edit, and reconcile records for one or more checking accounts. The program updates balance figures when you change or delete a deposit or withdrawal amount. Checks can be reviewed either by number or by category.

FLOWER POWER

Your first three checks can pay for the accessories now available from Comrex in Torrance, CA, that make their ComRiter CR-II daisy wheel printer capable of performing as a versatile word processor with most personal computers or as a stand-alone electronic typewriter. These accessories are lightweight keyboard ($199), cut-sheet feeder ($259), and tractor feed ($120). Price of the CR-II is $599.



The ComRiter CR-II printer and its new peripherals

Also new from Comrex is a line of 5¼" diskettes. Model CR-10005 offers single-sided, single-density recording; CR-10010 single-sided, double-density; and CR-10015 double-sided, double-density. All carry a five-year guarantee. The premium model CR-10020 offers double-sided, double-density recording a lifetime guarantee.

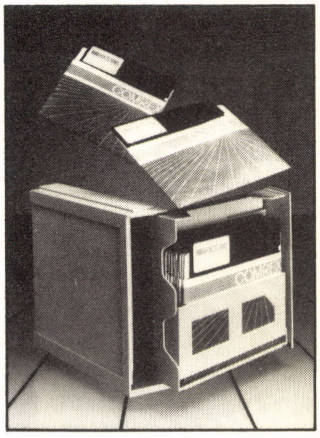
APPLE A LA MODEM

Zoom Telephonics of Boston, MA is offering ***Apple II/IIe*** users a free permanent subscription to The Source, a well-known database, with purchase of its Networker for $129. The single-slot, 300-baud modem includes a diskette with required communications software.

The Source, accessible with a local phone call in five hundred major metropolitan areas, offers electronic mail and access to hundreds of boards, along with many business and financial databases, reservations and consumer services, and games.

PRETTY AS A PICTURE

If you own an ***Atari 800*** computer and have three 16K boards, then here's an item for you. Mosaic Electronics of Oregon City, Oregon has released the Mosaic Adapter, which is a device that will give your computer 48K and provide you with an open memory slot for other peripherals.



Comrex's new diskettes

All you have to do is take the RAM chips off two of the Atari 16K Ram boards, and slip them into the open socket of the Mosaic Adapter. The folks at Mosaic have been thoughtful enough to provide picture guided instructions for ease in installation. The Mosaic 64K RAM SELECT or an 80 column board can be used in conjunction with the Mosaic Adapter.

ALL IN COLOR

New from Radio Shack are the following items:

- The Videotex Plus software packages (Models I/III and II/12/16) allow communication with computer information services of like protocol.
- Target Planner Calc is a new, $99.95 electronic spreadsheet that works with the TRS-80 Model 4, Model III and Model I.
- Also hot off the presses is the TP-10 Thermal Printer, for use with the TRS-80 Color Computer or Micro Color Computer Model MC-10. The TP-10 prints ninety-five characters plus sixteen block graphics characters, up to thirty-two per line, on 4 1/8" wide paper.



STORY: Bob Sodaro/ART: John Costanza

you Read it Here First

With this issue, VCI has attempted to inform our readers of potential rip-offs and catastrophes, now and in the future. We have, however, saved the most grievous example for last.

We've just received a report from Pedro Lobelez, VCI's correspondent in Mexico City. Pedro was assigned to investigate the soon-to be infamous line of videogames from Nada Games, corporate headquarters in San Squertes, Mexico.

The Nada games, only now creeping (nay, crawling) north of the border (and carried only by the most venal retailers) were designed by the company president, former restauranteur and parole violator Carl ("Kahlua and Cream") Peebo.

Peebo's games are noteworthy for their dim, flickering graphics, two-note music, and buz-saw sound effects. Scoring is inaccurate or unreadable. Control is such that the player wonders if (s)he is using the correct joystick or paddle. Instructions, if included at all, are written in a Spanglish variant. Worse, many of the chewing gum-epoxied games don't boot or fall apart at a pinch.



But Peebo's most notorious achievement is in the packaging and titling of his games, as Pedro's report makes crystal clear. Pedro. . .?

"VCI was unable to interview Nada Games' president Carl Peebo, as he is locked in seclusion in his corporate headquarters and will not return our calls. However, due to our close proximity to the Nada Games' warehouse, we were able to obtain playable copies of the games.

It appears that Peebo is expanding his line from simple VCS games to computergames for the Timex Sinclair 1000 and even an interactive laserdisc game. We had the opportunity of screening Peebo's laserdisc *Star Trek* ("All New!" trumpets the sleeve). *Star Trek* is an interactive super eight film of a Beverly Hills bus tour, showing the hedges and gates of the stars.

It would appear, to this reporter, that the use of that title is misleading, if not litigous.

With NadaSoft, the computergames, Peebo seems to be striving for something unique: slice-of-life simulations. Titles include *Room of Doom* (text and graphics; dentist office logistics and operating procedures); *War Room* (textual; divorce court proceedings); and *Alien* (textual, static graphics; playing the part of a refugee, the player must fill out multiple forms and wait in a series of long lines).

Peebo's 2600 games continue his deceptive titling practices but reach an astonishing low in imagination and craftsmanship.

Surprisingly, Nada's first released game was, and still is, their best. Entitled *Spider Fighter,* it is a boxing match between a man and a giant spider. The player-controlled man is inevitably decked within seconds, but it is a true original.

Industry insiders claim that after *Spider Fighter,* Peebo took a two-pronged approach to his subsequent games: he began to cut expenses by hiring computer-illiterate programmers and he developed game themes based on the business he knows best, restaurants.

His restaurant series includes *Frogger* (dissect and prepare frog's legs against the clock); *Chopper Command* (play an expeditor behind a Sushi bar); and *M*A*S*H* (you guessed it—potatoes).

After the failure of the restaurant series, quality plummeted even further. In short order, Peebo designed and released:

Moon Patrol. The player is a security guard at a woman's college, assigned to swat away male student pranksters

Space Invaders. Swat pesky neighbors away from your patio.

Space Spartans. Nada's paddle game offering. Clean up a living room.

Pole Position. As a member of the winter olympics ground crew, the player positions the poles for an upcoming downhill ski run.

Spacehawk. Perhaps the worst of the lot, though it boasts the best sound effects: a nebular spitting contest between player and computer.

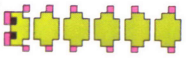
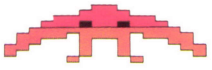
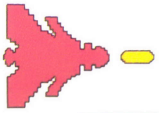
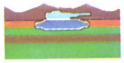
Desperate to raise cash, Peebo, VCI has learned, is now releasing the same game under two different titles and in two different packages! *Jungle Hunt* ("blast the endangered species!" urges the instruction tissue) has the same graphics and sound as *Football* (one on one football, as it turns out). Likewise, *Phoenix,* which simulates bumper to bumper traffic in that Arizona city's downtown area, is identical to *Vanguard,* which is described in its instruction stub as "a tense chase through a crowded urban center between a Brink's truck and wily desperadoes."

With the poor distribution and sales of his games, Peebo is reportedly considering selling his interest in Nada, perhaps to accept a senior executive position with an American company. The offers are firm; only his extradition problems need to be ironed out.

For some time, bogus designer jeans, cassette tapes and watches have been sold with misleading labels affixed. A similar practice is now being pursued here in San Squertes. Let the buyer beware!"

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- ☐ **Vanguard**[2] 
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- ☐ **Kangaroo**™ [4] 
- ☐ **Dig Dug**[5] 
- ☐ **Galaxian**[6] 
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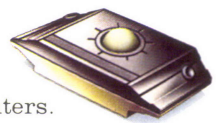
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